Moonlight View of WESTMINSTER ABBEY *from the Surrey side of the Thames*

WESTMINSTER ABBEY;

WITH

OTHER OCCASIONAL POEMS,

AND A

FREE TRANSLATION

OF THE

OEDIPUS TYRANNUS

OF SOPHOCLES.

ILLUSTRATED WITH ENGRAVINGS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF INDIAN ANTIQUITIES.

Thos. Maurice.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,
BY W. BULMER AND CO. CLEVELAND-ROW, ST. JAMES'S.
AND SOLD BY WHITE, COCHRANE, AND CO. FLEET STREET,
AND THE AUTHOR AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM.
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THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE EARL OF CARYSFORT,

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PREFACE.

PRODIGY and Fable are so intimately blended with whatever was magnificent and stupendous under the Romish superstition, that we must not wonder if the foundation of so august and celebrated an edifice as WESTMINSTER-ABBEY, be attributed to supernatural aid, and its consecration be affirmed to have been attended with peculiar and distinguished miracles. Accordingly we are informed in Monkish

legends, that St. Peter himself descended at its solemnization; a grand chorus of celestial music joined in the awful ceremony; while the radiant glories of Heaven illumined the rising fabric.

To descend, however, from fable to reality, it was originally founded about the year 600, by one of the first Saxon kings, upon the ruins of an ancient temple, said to have been dedicated to Apollo. On the invasion of the Danes it became the object of sacrilegious fury; but its decaying splendour was revived, first by Edgar, and afterwards by Edward the Confessor, who pulled down the old church, and caused a new and most magnificent edifice, for that age, to be raised on its site, in the

form of a cross. He confirmed all the old charters in its favour; he granted a new one, with more ample privileges, and more liberal endowments; he caused it to be signed by all the nobility and dignified clergy of the realm, in a general convention holden for that purpose; and he closed the whole by a solemn deed, fraught with the most tremendous imprecations upon all such as should infringe it. Two centuries after, a partial decay having taken place, the repair of this Abbey, on an extended scale, was begun by HENRY the Third, who did not live to complete the design he had engaged in. Amidst the bloody and tumultuous wars between the Houses of York and Lancaster, when all the works of science and genius throughout the kingdom were at a

stand, it was indebted for its improvements, during this gloomy interval, to the private munificence of the several monks and abbots who successively enjoyed its revenues.

To Henry the Seventh Westminster-Abbey owed the completion of its grandeur, by his erecting that beautiful pile of Gothic architecture which bears his name, and is justly esteemed its greatest ornament. The rose of Lancaster is still visible on many parts of the building, and his monument of solid brass in the centre of the chapel, so nobly gilt, and exquisitely wrought, as to have been the admiration of ages, has given him that kind of immortality which his vanity seemed to aim at. His son and successor, however, paid

little regard to the object of his father's ambition, by suffering it to be plundered of inestimable treasures, the accumulation of ages; and in the unhappy civil wars, when the ancient and venerable beauty of all the religious houses in the kingdom was wantonly defaced, its costly shrines and richly painted windows became once more the object of sacrilegious fury. At length, towards the conclusion of the 17th century, a general and complete repair of this august edifice, at the national expense, was thought absolutely necessary to save it from falling into total ruin. This great work was undertaken by Sir Christopher Wren, with equal vigour and ability, and has since been nearly finished according to the plan laid down by that celebrated architect.

The south side has been new cased with a more durable kind of stone than that which formerly invested it, and which, by the injuries of time, was in many places decayed to a considerable depth: two very stately towers have been added to strengthen the building, not inferior, in point of workmanship and majesty, to any part of the ancient structure; and the choir has been adorned with new stalls and seats, in a style corresponding with the internal part of the fabric.

Thus much was thought necessary to be said to gratify the curiosity of the reader, as he will find the following pages allude to more important considerations than those which merely regard its external history. Brought,

of late, more prominently into public view, and enriched with new decorations, this mighty dormitory of the illustrious dead cannot fail to awaken in the mind the most awful reflections on the transitoriness of human glory, and the vanity of all sublunary distinctions. If, in the subsequent pages, the important truths, dictated by this survey of one of the noblest remains of Antiquity in Britain, are impressively displayed, the Author's end will be answered; and he will have the satisfaction to know, that the last effort of a Muse fostered by JOHNSON, and applauded by JONES, has not been exerted in vain.

WESTMINSTER-ABBEY:

AN

ELEGIAC AND HISTORICAL POEM.

ARGUMENT.

CANTO I.

The Poem opens with reflections suitable to the grandeur and solemnity of the subject.—High antiquity of the structure—the most venerable remain of Gothic Architecture in England—sublimely eminent amid the wrecks of time, and the revolution of empires.—Rapid sketch of its ancient grandeur at the period when the Roman Catholic religion flourished in its meridian splendor.—Shrine of Edward the Confessor—its immense wealth.—Henry the Seventh's Chapel.—Edward the First.—Houses of York and Lancaster, with their rival roses slumber undistinguished in this House of Death.—Vanity of Ambition—Pitt—Fox.—Vanity of Genius and Science—Dryden—Handel—Murray—Mead—Casaubon.—Ancient times of Chivalry—the Crusaders—the feudal Barons.—Personal combats of ancient warriors—Percy and Douglas.—Fondness of our ancestors for armorial bearings, richly blazoned—massy shields and spears—statues in brass—statues in marble.—Distinguished females—Queen Elizabeth—Mary Queen of Scots—Queen Anne—Dutchess of Somerset—Percy, Dutchess of Northumberland.

The NORTH PORTICO; *anciently called the* BEAUTIFUL.

WESTMINSTER-ABBEY:

AN

ELEGIAC AND HISTORICAL POEM.

CANTO THE FIRST.

MAJESTIC Monument of pious toil!
  Whose towers sublime in Gothic grandeur soar—
Where Death sits brooding o'er his noblest spoil,
  And strews with royal dust the sacred floor:

Stupendous Fabric! that, through many an age,
  Closed in eternal night, hath proudly stood;
Secure, 'mid Desolation's boundless rage,
  The wasting fire, and the devouring flood;

Secure, while fleeting man's ephemeral race—
Whose labours rear'd thy massive walls so high;
Fix'd yon proud columns on their central base,
And bade thy turrets rush into the sky—

Have roll'd, by myriads, down the dark profound,
Wreck'd on Oblivion's solitary strand;—
Secure, while meaner fanes have crumbled round,
Dash'd to the ground by Time's destroying hand!

Since first those turrets felt the solar ray,
What changes have convulsed the rolling ball;
What mighty empires have been swept away,
What glorious dynasties been doom'd to fall!

August and hallow'd Dome! thro' earth renown'd;
Ere yet thy grandeur and thy beauty fade,
Ere Fate's loud voice *thy* destin'd hour shall sound,
And yon proud battlements in dust are laid,

Unfold thy portals to my daring song—
Ye dusky iles, ye lonely cloisters, hail!
Come, INSPIRATION, lead my steps along,
And all the secrets of the grave unveil.

Nor thou, chaste Orb! to whose unconscious beam,
In Britain's groves,* once burn'd unhallow'd fires,
Whose pale ray, trembling in Augusta's stream,
Illumes, with silver light, her hundred spires:

The cheering radiance of that beam deny,
To chase the horrors of this dreadful gloom;
Where the night-phantom, swiftly gliding by,
Shoots o'er my path, and beckons to the tomb!

Not thus, proud fane! in Britain's elder day,
Thy sombre vaults incumbent shades o'erspread;
At midnight roll'd, sublime, the choral lay,
While blazing shrines a noon-day lustre shed.

Those gorgeous shrines, where mightiest Monarchs bow'd,
Bright with a thousand burning tapers gleam'd;
Thro' thy vast portals rush'd th' adoring crowd,
Round thy high roofs the wafted incense stream'd.

* In Roman Britain, under the name of Diana. St. Paul's Cathedral is said to have been erected on the ruins of a temple of Diana; this Abbey on the ruins of one sacred to Apollo.

Enrich'd by Genius, at the altar fired!
The blazon'd walls, and pictur'd windows glow'd;
The radiant CROSS the raptur'd throng inspir'd;
Loud rang the dome, and wide the glory flow'd.

Loaded with gifts from Asia's fragrant shore,
Thy beauteous porch* admiring pilgrims sought,
Thy flaming altars heap'd with gems and ore,
And relics, from imperial Salem, brought.

What pen th' unrivall'd splendors shall recite
That mark'd the sainted Founder's† sumptuous shrine;
Oppressive beaming on the dazzled sight,
With richest jewels deck'd, ‡ a countless mine!

Barbarian pomp! with sound devotion warm,
The soul no costly pageantry requires;
No gilded roofs th' astonish'd eye to charm,
Nor blazing shrines to fan her purer fires!

* The magnificent Portico, at the north entrance, was, from its admirable style of architecture, anciently denominated the *beautiful*, or *Solomon's Gate*.

† Edward the Confessor.

‡ The offerings of the Crusaders after their return from the Holy Land, in the succeeding reign, were of immense value.

Far from the domes in dazzling pomp array'd,
Where sparkling gems, or burning tapers glare,
She loves the solemn, dark, sequester'd shade,
And silent breathes to Heaven her fervent pray'r.

When dim the ruby's fading beams shall grow,
Nor radiance more from polish'd diamonds roll,
Thy light, oh Virtue! unimpair'd shall glow,
Bright as yon stars, and stedfast as the pole!

Now darkness, shadowing wide the silent earth,
Bids Vice unmask, and stalk her nightly round;
Now frantic bacchanals renew their mirth,
While Commerce rests, in golden slumbers bound.

Now Dissipation drives her whirling car
In courts to shine, or flaunt in masquerade;
Her thousand torches glitter from afar,
And pour meridian day on midnight shade.

Hence, Greatness, with thy toys—thy stars, thy strings,
The jewell'd sceptre, and imperial crown;
My soul superior views the pride of Kings,
And on the bright parade of courts looks down.

The glittering spoils that round Ambition blaze,
The trophied arch, the golden canopy,
The plume, refulgent with the diamond's rays,
The shout of millions echoing to the sky,

For the deep silence of the grave I spurn—
And quit the living pageant for the dead:
Mine be the PLUME that shades yon mouldering urn,
While Death's dark CANOPY inshrouds my head.

Hark! how the hollow blast, with savage wail,
Roars 'mid the turrets of the rocking pile;
While in deep notes, responsive to the gale,
The slow bell labours thro' the lengthening ile.

Awe-struck I kneel, and kiss the hallow'd ground,
Where Britain's warlike progeny repose;
Whose hearts no more with martial transports bound,
Nor burning pulse with patriot ardour glows.

Expand thy gates of brass, thou glorious Fane,*
Of matchless structure, beauteous to behold:
Rear'd by that prince, o'er Bosworth's crimson'd plain
Whose victor arm the storm of battle roll'd.

* Henry the Seventh's Chapel.

While, raptur'd, on thy roof, thy walls, I gaze,
That with such pomp of Gothic splendour tow'r;
And while, aloft, the banner'd trophies blaze,*
Let musing Sadness rule the solemn hour.

Ye monarchs of the earth! attend your doom,
And throw awhile the rich tiara by;
Come, mourn with me at mighty Henry's tomb,
And heed a monitor that cannot lie!

The far-famed conqu'rors of their transient day,
The lion-race, of dauntless Edward † born,
Divested of their purple pomp survey,
And from their grasp the rubied sceptre torn.

Approach, nor tremble while your steps descend
To charnell'd caverns—Grandeur's last abode!
From mouldering majesty its trappings rend,
And view the worm its regal spoil corrode.

* The Banners of the Knights of the Bath, suspended in that chapel.

† Edward the First, from whom were lineally descended the kings who triumphed at Agincourt and Cressy.

Shades of the mighty! rise—confirm my strains,—
Rise thou, whom Agincourt triumphant view'd,
What now of all your boundless spoil remains,
Of plunder'd nations, and a world subdued?

Sovereigns of Britain! when in gorgeous state
You bend the knee, at yon high altar crown'd,
Let stern Reflection paint your destin'd fate,
When a few suns have roll'd their radiant round.

With thundering shouts when Heaven's high arch resounds,
And long and loud the pealing organs blow,
When the rich diadem your brow surrounds,
Think on th' insatiate grave that yawns below!

Here York and Lancaster are foes no more,
In the same dark sepulchral vault inurn'd;
Their eager contest for dominion's o'er,
Extinct the rage that in their bosoms burn'd.

Senseless to glory as their marble shrines,
The jasper columns that their ashes shade,
Low in the dust each mighty chief reclines,
In mail no more, but mantling shrouds array'd.

Blasted the LILIES * on the blazon'd shield,
  Wither'd the rival ROSES' † fatal bloom?
All vanquish'd on this vast but bloodless field,
  Where Fate's dark banner sheds its baleful gloom.

Here—scarcely less renown'd in Glory's page,—
  Sublime in genius, rich in classic lore!
The rival statesmen of our wondering age
  Slumber, unconscious, on the marble floor.

Since Tully pour'd in Rome his fervid strain,
  Than PITT's, what loftier accents charm'd the soul?
With nobler rage through yon resounding fane, ‡
  Than Fox, who bade the manly periods roll?

Oft through incumbent night's protracted gloom,
  Of eloquence rush'd on th' impetuous stream,
Till, through the casements of th' illumin'd dome,
  Astonish'd Phœbus pour'd his orient beam

* The lily of France, recently quartered by our Princes.

† The *white* and *red roses*, the peculiar distinction of those illustrious Houses.

‡ St. Stephen's Chapel.

Close by great CHATHAM's shrine their dust is laid,
Alike their genius tower'd, alike their fame—
When marbles crumble to the dust they shade,
Immortal blooms the Patriot's sacred name!

Here too—as Time rolls on his vast career—
GRENVILLE, whose breast with fires congenial glows,
Shall weeping nations place thy honour'd bier,
And near thy PITT thy laurell'd head repose.

Thus Genius, Science—all that 's great or brave,
A mighty heap of ruins! round me lies,
Absorb'd, ingulph'd by the devouring grave;
All, all is vain beneath yon bounding skies.

Here quench'd for ever is the Muse's fire,
For ever ceas'd is Music's rapturous swell!
Near DRYDEN hangs untun'd his lofty lyre,
And HANDEL smites no more the deep-ton'd shell.

In these dark chambers of the grave reclines
Full many a letter'd, many an ermin'd sage;
In Learning's list how bright CASAUBON shines,
And MEAD, the boast of an enlighten'd age.

Who shall great MURRAY's* wondrous powers pourtray?
What music charm'd us like that silver tongue?
On which—mellifluous as the Mantuan's lay—
The crowded Bar, and raptur'd Senate hung.

But ages far remote the song demand,
When Chivalry led forth her martial train;
Of hardy knights here sleeps a gallant band,
Who fought on Palestine's immortal plain.

Burning with rage that infidels should sway
The realms where Jordan rolls her sacred flood,
To Syria's distant bounds they forced their way
Through hostile nations and a sea of blood.

And soon, aloft, on Salem's bastion'd walls,
In crimson pomp, the victor crosses glow,
Beneath their spears the might of Othman falls,
And the gemm'd crescent withers on his brow.

The Baron, haughty, jealous, fierce of soul,
Reserv'd in council, dauntless in the field,
Whom tyrants could not bend, nor law controul,
Hath here resign'd to fate th' ensanguin'd shield.

* The late Earl of Mansfield.

The pond'rous helmet, and the massy spear,
Suspended high, their master's prowess show,
Who frowns, above, in breathing brass, severe,
Or tow'rs in marble o'er the prostrate foe.

Form'd by some British Phidias' daring hand,
Swells the broad chest, high beat the throbbing veins,
With nerves of rock the giant limbs expand,
Athens revives on Albion's northern plains.

What life, what fire, informs th' athletic frame,
Sublimely wrought the rage of time to brave;
In ductile gold the blazon'd lions flame, *
And the proud plumes in silver radiance wave.

As o'er these dreary catacombs I tread,
What mingled passions in my bosom rise,
Here Wisdom sojourns with the slumbering dead,
And Fraud detected drops the vain disguise.

* The richness and beauty of the colouring and gilding on some of the most ancient monuments in this Abbey, after the lapse of so many centuries, are astonishing. The colours and enamelling on the tomb of Henry III. are among the most splendid examples of this species of gorgeous decoration.

WEALTH, POWER, AMBITION, where are fled those charms
That tyrannize o'er man's deluded race?
Ye that arouse the maddening world to arms,
And shake contending kingdoms to their base,

Where is the breathing glow of BEAUTY fled,
That once the soul of rival warriors fir'd,
The sparkling eye, the cheek with crimson spread,
The air—the shape—by crowded courts admir'd!

For here full many a beauteous virgin sleeps,
For matchless worth and constancy approv'd—
And many a dame the soften'd marble weeps,
From kings descended, and by kings belov'd.

Ah! what avail'd their high patrician blood?
Promiscuous fall the beauteous and the brave—
What, roll'd from kings, the rich unsullied flood,
Virtue alone survives the vanquish'd grave.

The loveliest cheek, the eye that brightest beams,
Blooms but to perish—sparkles but to fade,
Charm us with brilliant, but with transient gleams,
Then sink, extinguish'd, in eternal shade!

Peace, beauteous Exile! to thy injur'd shade,*
In life defam'd, in death with glory crown'd,
Securely slumber, near thy rival laid,
Beyond the grave her vengeance cannot wound.

Too stern ELIZA! why that barbarous deed,
Which a deep shade o'er all thy laurels throws;
And could thy soften'd heart for ESSEX bleed,
Nor melt at suff'ring MARY's deeper woes?

But for this blot, yon center'd sun ne'er view'd
A throne with more triumphant splendour fill'd,
Each foreign rival by thy pow'r subdu'd,
Domestic faction by thy wisdom still'd!

What potent song shall utter half thy praise—
Let Europe's annals tell the wondrous tale—
Let freed Batavia songs of triumph raise,
Let Spain her wreck'd Invincible bewail.

* Mary Queen of Scots. Though the labours of some late historians have not been entirely successful in their endeavours to wipe away every reproach from the memory of this unfortunate Queen, yet it is universally acknowledged that she met the fate to which she was doomed with the firmness of an heroine, and the resignation of a martyr.

Nor less, on adamantine tablets grav'd,
The triumphs, ANNE! of thy victorious reign,
When Glory all her glittering ensigns wav'd,
To crush the Gaul on Blenheim's blood-stain'd plain!

Beneath yon tomb that towers in pillar'd pride,
With bright imperial trophies rich emblaz'd,
Illustrious SEYMOUR sleeps, to thrones allied,*
Above the pomp of thrones by virtue rais'd!

With nobler transport than her valiant sires,
For glory burn'd amid th' embattled field—
Her bosom glow'd with pure devotion's fires,
Truth her bright spear, and Faith her guardian shield.

Here, PERCY, as I cast my eyes around,
Lost in the blaze of titles and of birth;†
Who more than Thee for high descent renown'd,
Who more ennobled by intrinsic worth?

* The Dutchess of Somerset, wife to the Protector, father of Queen Jane Seymour, and uncle to Edward VI. She herself was lineally descended from Edward the Third.

† The vault of the Percy family is in St. Nicholas Chapel, in this Abbey, where, in particular, in a most superb monument, erected to the memory

What marbles *can*—what breathing sculptures *dare*—
We view, astonish'd, at thy lofty shrine;*
While near the gorgeous banners float in air,
Charged with the glories of thy mighty line.

Witness, ye fields! for ages drench'd with blood,
Ye hills! where Discord drove her thundering car,
When the fierce Scot a rival's arm withstood,
And Cheviot's mountains nursed the brooding war.

To Fancy's eye the glorious scenes return,
And oft she wanders o'er the lonely heath,
Transported, views the kindling battle burn,
And Hotspur raging through the field of death.

of her Grace by the Duke, her husband, lies interred the late Duchess of Northumberland. She was sole heiress, by lineal descent, to the baronies of Percy, Lucy, Poynings, Fitzpayne, Bryan, and Latimer, through the intermarriages of her ancestors with the several heirs of those families.

* Suspended in Henry the Seventh's Chapel. At the erection of the church also, the arms of the Percy family were blazon'd among those of other nobles of high rank between the arches of the pillars that support the roof. Those of *Gulielmus de Percy* being, OR, a LION RAMPANT, rank the 13th in order, on the south side of the Abbey.

Known by the splendours his proud crest displays,
  Refulgent gleaming o'er th' illumin'd plain,
Douglas, from far, his ancient foe surveys,
  And springs impetuous o'er the heaps of slain.

And now more quick their throbbing pulses beat,
  With ardent valour's high electric flame;
Like raging lions the stern champions meet,
  To whom contending nations trust their fame.

On either hand divide the hostile bands,
  Her reeking blade ensanguin'd Slaughter sheathes;
In silent horror Expectation stands,
  And Fame aloft th' immortal laurel wreathes.*

Resistless as the lightning's flash descends
  The gleaming blade, while ether kindles round;
The ponderous lance the shatter'd target rends,
  And thousand glittering fragments strew the ground.

* The Author begs to observe that, in the above description of a combat between those mighty border chieftains, he had no particular historical fact in view. A general sketch of these dreadful personal contests in the times of chivalry, was alone intended.

High bounds with rage the palpitating heart,
The warrior's ardour burns, the patriot's pride,
Vindictive flames their glowing eyeballs dart,
And with a crimson hue their cheeks are died.

Fierce, and more fierce, the fiery contest grows,
The destin'd theme of many a minstrel's song,
O'er their stain'd arms a sanguine deluge flows,
And anxious terrors chill the gazing throng.

Pierc'd with a hundred wounds they still contend,
With feebler rage, but unextinguish'd fires:
Fate bids at length the stubborn conflict end,
And DOUGLAS at his rival's feet expires!

In mightier Fate's eternal fetters bound,
Here, DOUGLAS, view o'erthrown thy victor foe;
Unconscious to the trumpet's thrilling sound,
Honour's high throb, and valour's martial glow.

Should some fierce chief of Caledonia's shore,
In fame renown'd as that immortal line,
These mansions of the mighty dead explore,
Ah! scornful pass not yon high-blazon'd shrine.

Proud Scot! exult not o'er yon trophied urn,
But tread with awe the grave's tremendous verge,
For THEE, too soon, the funeral torch shall burn,
For THEE, too soon, resound the deathful dirge!

ARGUMENT.

CANTO II.

The First Canto having been, for the most part, engaged in general views of the subject, and in discussing the higher order of events—thrones subverted—dynasties extinguished—sanguinary contests between nations and illustrious individuals—the Second Canto presents to the Reader's attention, scenes and characters of a more pacific kind, and is more particular in its details.—The objects and persons noticed, however, lie so widely scattered through that vast dormitory of death, that no regular connected survey of them could be given. —A rapid summary is exhibited of British statesmen—patriots—divines—philosophers—artists—and poets—deposited in its chapels and cloisters.—Among those enumerated are—Howard—Russel—Sidney—Chatham—Newton—Camden—Samuel Johnson—Sprat—Barrow—South—Pearse—Kneller—Rubiliac—Bacon—Chaucer—Spenser—Shakspeare—Ben. Jonson—Milton—Cowley—Butler—Dryden—Gray—Solemn apostrophe to their departed Spirits—the subversion of the fabric at the sound of the last trumpet—a rapid sketch of the horrors of the last day—the resurrection of the glorious dead to happiness and immortality.

WESTMINSTER-ABBEY.

CANTO THE SECOND.

ONCE more, imperial Dome! thy hallow'd bounds,
By Cynthia's glimmering beam, the Muse invades,
Once more the lofty moral strain resounds,
In thunder echoed through thy inmost shades.

How vast the concourse in th' unsparing tomb,
How mix'd the visionary group appears;
Here virgins, wither'd in their loveliest bloom,
There the hoar veteran of an hundred years. *

* Among the numerous instances of longevity to be met with in these cloisters ought by no means to be omitted THOMAS PARR, the NESTOR of Britain, buried here Nov. 15th, 1635, aged 152 years.

Here regal diadems superbly glow,
  There mitres glitter with serener ray;
The martial palm that decks the victor's brow,
  Mingled with Learning's never-fading bay.

Albion, as o'er thy shrouded sons I tread,
  What awful terror does the thought excite;
While all thy virtuous, famed, and noble Dead
  Start from the shades, and sweep before my sight.

Thy bearded Senators of high renown,
  In Freedom's sacred cause who dauntless stood—
Defied the scepter'd tyrant's darkest frown,
  And brav'd the axe, that stream'd with patriot blood;

Sublimely eloquent! whose noble rage
  Struck terror thro' the venal courtier train,
While precepts worthy of th' Athenian Sage,*
  Charm'd in their lofty, bold, impassion'd strain.—

All whom the proud historic page proclaims
  For high heroic fortitude rever'd;
Thy Howards, Russels, Sidneys—mighty names!
  Through ages still to British breasts endear'd;

* Solon.

Cold, speechless, pale, beneath these roofs recline,
Trampled by slaves, by loathing reptiles spurn'd,
Silent the tongue so fondly deem'd divine,
The head that counsell'd, and the heart that burn'd!

Where are the fires that flash'd from CHATHAM'S eye,
The strains that from those lips impetuous flow'd;
When rouz'd to rage, when warm'd by Liberty,
The great Demosthenes of Britain glow'd.

By BACON'S genius with new life inspir'd,
Through the warm marble speaks th' indignant soul;
Again the Patriot's kindling breast is fired,
While Fancy hears his fervid periods roll.

Here, thy bold warriors, who, of *later age*,
Have spread thy fame through all th' astonish'd world,
Pointed beneath the Line thy righteous rage,
Or at the distant Pole thy thunder hurl'd,

Have, nerveless, dropp'd that spear whose light'ning ray
Wither'd the tyrant's lifted arm in fight;
Pour'd on the dungeon slave resistless day,
And bade him rise in freedom's sacred light.

Where hath not glory wafted VERNON's name?
Where, WAGER, WARREN—are your deeds unsung?
Where, CHURCHILL, TOWNSHEND—heirs of deathless fame,
And WOLFE, the theme of every Briton's tongue?

Curs'd civil rage—to glut thy thirsty spear,
Insatiate fiend, lamented ANDRE bled;
In life's gay morn, in glory's full career,
Low to the grave descends his youthful head:

His fate, with anguish smote the royal breast,
Where worth and valour ever find a friend;
The starting tear the Monarch's grief confess'd,
Who bade yon marble to his name ascend.

Here sleep the masters of the varied string,
That all the soul's suspended powers controll'd;
Or bade it mount upon the Seraph's wing,
Rapt Fancy madd'ning as the measures roll'd!

Here slumber those whose active spirits soar'd
Far as the utmost stretch of daring thought,
Who knew all arts, all sciences explor'd,
Now rang'd the stars, and now the centre sought:

The holy men who taught th' aspiring soul
On strong devotion's eagle plume to rise;
Who knew the frantic passions to controul,
And rais'd our groveling wishes to the skies.

What shade majestic glides yon ile along,
Around whose head the rainbow's glories stream?
His precepts strike with awe th' astonish'd throng,
Who hang, admiring, on the lofty theme.

'Tis NEWTON's self unfolds, in raptur'd strain,
The flaming track which devious comets run,
Th' eternal laws that bind the billowy main,
And to the centre fix the stedfast sun.

Shall CAMDEN sleep, forgotten, in the dust,
Who from Oblivion's harpy fang could save?
Lo! grateful Isis decks his honour'd bust,
And pays that immortality he gave.—

Oh! could mine eyes remotest ages pierce:
Like thee, antiquity's dark page explore;
Full many a godlike chief should grace my verse,
Whose bones unhonour'd spread th' ennobled floor.

The Muse, slow-winding thro' the clositer'd gloom,
  Now seeks the grave where laurell'd JOHNSON lies;
With cypress garlands proud to deck his tomb,
  And mingle with the just her grateful sighs.

Shall HE, whose plaudits fann'd her youthful fire,
  And bade the spark of high ambition glow;
Shall HE, who nobly swept the classic lyre,
  Want the bright wreath th' immortal Nine bestow?

The sweets of ancient as of modern lore,
  And all that swell'd the proud historic page,
His active mind delighted to explore,—
  Exalted pattern to a thoughtless age!

Yet could not these his ardent soul confine,
  Through nature darted deep his wide survey,
From yon vast azure to the cavern'd mine,
  And realms impervious to the eye of day.

Hence, Superstition, with thy frantic din,
  While SPRATT, while BARROW, faith's calm joys display,
With artful SOUTH, who knew the soul to win
  From earth to heav'n, and shew'd the radiant way.

In PEARCE humility and genius join'd,
The friend, the scholar, and the critic, shone;
Let every Muse his bust with garlands bind,
And Learning her eternal loss bemoan.

Illustrious KNELLER! were thy pencil mine,
Mine the luxuriance of thy nobler vein,
With bolder rage should rush the kindling line,
And in my song thy labours breathe again.

While RUBILIAC inspires the glowing stone,
And calls forth all the wonders of his art,
In mute astonishment his pow'rs we own,
Nor check the sigh that heaves the bursting heart.

Hold, Death,* thy hand, that threaten'd stroke forbear:
The stroke yon grief-struck husband would repel;
Whose eye distraction marks, whose front despair,
Whose veins in agonizing horror swell!

Mark as the tide of ebbing life retires,
Thro' yon fair form what well-feign'd languors creep:
While her fond, speechless lord in death admires,
And clasps her sinking in eternal sleep.

* Alluding to the beautitul monument erected to the memory of Joseph Gascoigne Nightingale, Esq. and his Lady.

But, oh! what Muse, amidst the bold display
Of art and genius which these glooms afford,
Shall paint their efforts in as bold a lay,
And all the grandeur of the scene record!

My deafen'd ear what sound of horror greets?
'Tis the dire night-bird, with her hideous cry,—
Against yon arch her boding pinion beats;
And to their graves the startled Phantoms fly.

Stay, honour'd Shadows of the wise and good!
No spoiler's ruffian hands your shrines molest;
No midnight murderer's daring steps intrude,
To violate the grave's eternal rest.

Oh! point the way to that sequester'd gloom,
Where Britain's bards my tearful homage claim;
Profounder darkness shades the lofty dome,
And wilder terrors shake my trembling frame.

Was that pale mass inform'd with heav'nly fire?
Genius and Wit, is this your destin'd end?
Favour'd of Phœbus, break thy useless lyre,
Thy steps already to the grave descend.

Ah! vain the Poet's, vain the Painter's art;
Fiction to Truth resigns her flow'ry reign;
Nor aught avail'd to ward th' unerring dart,
The loftiest fancy, or the sweetest strain.

Yet, stern Destroyer, vaunt not o'er their bier,
Nor boast o'er art thy gloomy victory;
Though snatch'd by thee from all on earth held dear,
How many millions have they snatch'd from thee!

Fain would the Muse recount each honour'd name,
And with reflected lustre deck her page;
Sing the bright sources whence she caught her flame,
And, while she sings, aspire to kindred rage.

But, ah! they want no fame her skill can give,
Their monuments sublimer trophies grace;
They in their own immortal works survive,
Nor can Oblivion's rage those works deface.

Yet duteous will she pause at CHAUCER's shrine,
And hail the hoary sire of British verse;
To paint each scene of motley life was thine,
And many a jocund tale thy lays rehearse.

What though four cent'ries have obscur'd thy rhyme?
Still lives each character thy pen pourtray'd;
Thy numbers only feel the force of time,
The features flourish, though the colours fade.

Soft o'er the dust of SPENSER let me tread,
Whose magic reed beguil'd the shepherd's hours;
Or, through the mazes of enchantment led,
Through floods, and coral grots, and fairy bow'rs.

Sweet Bard! whom Mulla's widow'd tide deplores,
Oh! skill'd to "lance the heart" with tender woe,
How do the strains thy Muse of sorrow pours,
In kindred anguish melt us as they flow.

To see thee, by Rebellion's lawless hand,
From all the joys of love and friendship torn;
Thy fields the plunder of a barbarous hand,
And, oh! thyself the haughty BURLEIGH'S* scorn.

* The Lord-treasurer Burleigh, buried also in this Abbey, was the implacable enemy of Spenser, whose hatred was farther inflamed by some verses, in which our author beautifully and feelingly describes the anxiety attending a dependance on court favours.

Thee, too, she hails,* alike Misfortune's sport,
Whose artful satire scourg'd a bigot race;
Lov'd, yet neglected, by a venal court,
Its giddy monarch's fav'rite and disgrace.

Master of Nature! who, with heav'n-taught skill,
Knew every passion's secret spring to move;
With horror now the throbbing breast to chill,
Now rouse to vengeance, and now warm to love:

Whether we hear thy artful Hamlet rave,
Or frantic Lear his tale of horror tell,
With Ariel mount, or tempt the yawning cave
Where hags of darkness chaunt the mutter'd spell.

Oh, SHAKSPEARE! great in thy collective might,
Beyond each Ancient's loftiest name renown'd;
Who shall pursue thee in thy daring flight?
Who trace those steps that spurn creation's bound?

* Butler, who is recorded to have died of want; but who, at all events, passed his life in extreme distress.

* "Whose satire"—i.e. the poem of Hudibras.

Immortal shade of letter'd JONSON rise!
Nor more with jealous fires disdainful burn;
Though Avon's loftier Swan hath snatch'd the prize,
Still no mean laurel decks thy honour'd urn.

Rise, and resume thy ancient comic vein,
As through thy Muse's fav'rite haunts we stray;
The sprightly COWLEY, too, our train shall join,
And give to wit and love the festive day.

Cimmerian darkness! shield me from the blaze
Of glory, strong, ineffable, that flows,
From those bright wheels that dart "pernicious rays,"
And bear Messiah on his blasted foes.

What black dismay, what horrors, shade each brow,
But chief th' Apostate's rebel soul appal!
As headlong down the yawning gulphs below
They rush,—while Chaos bellows in their fall.

With plume, like MILTON's, fervid and sublime,
As bold in genius and with rival fire,
Lo! DRYDEN, sweetest of the sons of rhyme,
"Whose song was music, and whose breast a lyre;"

Like great DARIUS fall'n;—while daring GRAY,
Though last, not humblest, of the lyric train,
Soars in his mantle through th' ætherial way,
Nor checks the fiery steed, but gives the loosen'd rein.

And ye, of meaner flame and humbler wing,
Whose ashes strew this consecrated ile;
Though dumb each voice, though tuneless ev'ry string,
Yet has the grave its charms, and death a smile.

The soul that spurn'd on earth its kindred clay,
May now substantiate all its airy dreams,
Transported through its own Elysium stray,
Taste nectar'd fruits, and quaff nepenthean streams.

Sweet be your slumbers as the lays ye sung,
May no barbarian rage your tombs deface,
Till the great chords of nature be unstrung,
And lightnings rend this fabric's mighty base.

Till from on high th' Archangel's trump shall sound,
And pour through nature the last loud alarms;
Level yon granite columns with the ground,
And from those breathing sculptures rend their charms.

Then Rome's proud shrine,* like this renown'd in fame,
And vast Sophia's † marble domes shall fall;
Give all their glowing jaspers to the flame,
And rush to atoms with the crumbling ball:—

Oh! for a plume of that Archangel's wing,
To write, in words of fire, the dreadful tale;
Oh! for that trump's immortal notes to sing
The horrors that the burning sphere assail.

I see that great, that dreadful day advance,
I hear th' unutterable thunders roll!
One sea of liquid fire the vast expanse,
While earthquakes rock the globe, from pole to pole.

Nor only sacred fanes and regal domes
Sink in the fiery conflagration drown'd;
Europe's proud capitals its rage consumes,
And Asia blazes thro' her farthest bound.

* St. Peter's.

† The great mosque of Sancta Sophia at Constantinople, originally built, and long used, as a Christian church.

Down Ætna's sides the flaming torrents rain,
Vesuvius all her hoarded treasures pours;
High on the storm-beat Andes' burning chain,
Renew'd, the vast volcanic deluge roars.*

The rocks dissolve—dissolves the radiant ore,
Whence genius form'd, sublime, the breathing bust;
Paros! thy shining wonders charm no more,
Palmyra's tow'ring fanes are turn'd to dust.

Where Nile once foam'd along its rocky bed,
No columns of eternal granite soar;
The Pyramids have bow'd their giant head,
Mix'd with the sands of Afric's burning shore.

O'er emerald rocks † and glowing corals roll'd,
Where is the sea that whelm'd proud Pharoah's host;
Dissolv'd the corals, and the gems behold,
With all the pearls of Ormus' wealthier coast.

* The whole range of the Cordelleras, or Andes, so far as hitherto explored, presents to the philosophic eye a series of volcanos, the greater part of them extinguished ages back, but some of them still continuing to vomit forth flames through the eternal snows that encompass their summits.

† The Emerald island, or *Mons Smaragdus* of Ptolemy, is situated, according to Bruce, in the Red Sea, in latitude 25° 3′ north.

Intensely ardent, as the flames descend,
The burning mine its latent wealth displays;
To their fierce rage the soften'd rubies bend,
And all Golconda's diamonds feed the blaze.

Chili's bright masses feel the searching ray,
Potosi's mountain rolls a silver tide;
Exhaled in vapour by th' unbounded day,
Ocean thro' all her cavern'd depths is dried.

What Muse is equal to th' amazing theme,
To paint the pangs of an expiring world,—
The whirlwind's rage—the lightning's fearful gleam,—
The thunders thro' its bursting centre hurl'd.—

Let nature perish in the storm of fire,
And art's proud spoils in ruin be o'erthrown;
Above the flaming wreck the JUST aspire,
Above the galaxy's refulgent zone.

And, 'mid the abyss of worlds that blaze on high,
Where brighter galaxies their beams display;
Beyond the flaming barriers of the sky,
Faith darts its ken, and wings its soaring way.

I see the spectres of five thousand years,
Bards, sages, chiefs, in long succession rise:
In triumph mount above the burning spheres,
Ardent in faith, impatient for the skies.

Th' Immortals, bending from their thrones of light,
Smite their loud harps, and hail th' ascending throng,
While to the heav'n of heav'ns they urge their flight,
Join the bright host, and swell th' eternal song.

AN

ELEGIAC AND HISTORICAL POEM.

AN

ELEGIAC

AND

HISTORICAL POEM,

SACRED TO

THE MEMORY AND VIRTUES

OF THE

HONOURABLE SIR WILLIAM JONES.

CONTAINING

A RETROSPECTIVE SURVEY

OF THE PROGRESS OF SCIENCE, AND THE

MOHAMMEDAN CONQUESTS

IN ASIA.

PREFACE.

THE subsequent Poem was first published in 1795; it was very favourably received by the public, particularly by the oriental part of that public, and has been *long out of print*. The subject being congenial to that of the former, and the stanza consonant, it is here reprinted at the earnest desire of numerous admirers of the illustrious Character whom it celebrates. To lament the loss, however, and to display the virtues and talents, eminent as they were, of Sir WILLIAM JONES, is by no means the sole object of the composition, which exhibits a comprehensive view of the progress of Eastern science;

and records, it is hoped, in no unanimated language, the rise and downfall of the great Mohammedan dynasties that have successively devastated Asia: of those sanguinary but transient dynasties, unbounded rapine and oppression constituted the sole basis, and the example of their consequent subversion, in the present situation of ravaged and subjected Europe, cannot be too forcibly or repeatedly brought before the view of the reflecting, and, yet unconquer'd,

BRITON.

ARGUMENT.

General introductory Reflections suited to the Subject; and considering DEATH, according to the Indian Hypothesis, as only inducing a change of being, and opening new scenes for philosophical research into the ample volume of Nature. Astronomical investigations, a favourite line of science with the deceased, specified as probably affording to the liberated soul the sublimest species of delight. The GENIUS OF ANCIENT ASIA descends—the distinguishing features of her character—virtue, valour, generosity; contrasted with those of the GENIUS OF MODERN ASIA—vice, cowardice, cruelty—she pronounces the eulogium of her Favourite, and traces the progress of Eastern science according to the arrangement of his own Dissertations before the Asiatic Society. From Persia, as a centre, taking the term in an extended point of view, so as also to include the western parts of Mount Taurus, where the Noachidæ first settled, the arts were diffused through Assyria, Phœnicia, India, Egypt, Carthage, Greece, and the Roman Empire.—The horrors of the MOHAMMEDAN IRRUPTION in the seventh century depicted, and the character of the first propagators of ISLAMISM in Asia, described as fatal to the sciences; afterwards, relaxing from their sanguinary fury, their descendants became, throughout the East, the patrons and promoters of the arts.—The particular and successive invaders of India enumerated, and their respective characters delineated—MAHMUD of Gazna—GENGIS—TIMUR—SHAHROCK—ULUG BEG—BABER—the Mogul dynasty of India—AKBER—AURUNGZEBE—the decline of that dynasty. The irruption of NADIR SHAH—of ABDOLLAH—the subversion of the Mogul empire—the horrid excesses and barbarity of the succeeding period—Freedom and Science revive at Benares, under the auspices of the English; and, in particular, through the strenuous and indefatigable exertions of Sir WILLIAM JONES—his character and accomplishments as a man, and as a scholar—as a man distinguished by active piety, and an ardent love of liberty—as a scholar, more particularly eminent for his attainments in astronomy, chronology, antiquities, languages, music, botany.—The GENIUS OF ANCIENT ASIA having finished her eulogium at the tomb of Genius, disappears—the Dii Minores, or inferior genii of India, now arise, and pay their devoirs at that tomb—the beam of Aurora appearing, they chaunt the Mithraic hymn, and are finally absorbed into the beams of the Sun, the fruitful parent of Asiatic superstition.

THE TIME

in which the incidents in the following Poem are supposed to take place, is the period between sunset and sunrise.

THE SCENE

lies on the banks of the Ganges, at the tomb of departed Genius.

AN

ELEGIAC AND HISTORICAL POEM,

&c.

SHALL Genius slumber in the oblivious tomb,
By no sublime funereal song deplor'd:
Shall he, who tower'd on Fancy's loftiest plume,
Want the sweet dirge o'er beauteous LAURA* pour'd?

Muses of Asia! ye who fann'd the fire
That in your favourite's ardent bosom glow'd,
With all your flame my kindling soul inspire,
As when the exalted strain to Mithra† flow'd.

* See the elegant Translation of Petrarch's pathetic Elegy on Laura, in the Asiatic Poems of Sir William Jones.

† Alluding to the Ode to Mithra; in which the rites of the ancient Sabian superstition are depicted.

Arise!—and deeply smite the choral shell;
Solemn, yet plaintive, roll the impassion'd lay:
Like those which shook, of old, the mystic cell,
And mourn'd the all-cheering sun's departing ray.

For, radiant as yon orb's declining beam
Flames on illumin'd Taurus' western brow,
His star, descending, shed a lovely gleam,
Whose lustre shall to latest ages glow.

Hail! nurse of arts and song—thy hallow'd shore,
Asia, permit my daring steps to rove;
Thy ancient Magi's vaulted caves explore,
And pierce the dark, sequester'd, blood-stain'd* grove.

But chief, where Ganges' rapid billows glide
By many a ruin'd tower and mouldering fane,
That erst the rage of hostile chiefs defied,
And echoed with devotion's raptur'd strain;

* I have asserted and proved, in the Indian Antiquities, that all the sacred groves of Asia, and particularly those of India (an assertion which, from the general feature of mildness that marks their present character, to some readers seemed incredible) were deeply stained with bestial and human sacrifices.

Be mine to wander o'er yon gloomy strand,
Where drooping Science bends o'er Virtue's bier;
And, mingling with yon sorrowing, sable band,
Heave the deep sigh, and pour the gushing tear.

Now night's incumbent shadows, deepening round,
The proud remains of India's glory veil,
Pale lightnings skirt the horizon's distant bound;
Loud beats the surge, and hollow blows the gale.

An anxious horror all my soul pervades,
I see the awful page of Fate unroll'd;
Darkling I range through death's profoundest shades,
Futurity's tremendous scenes unfold!

Ah! what are days, or months, or circling years,
Of life's dark pilgrimage th' allotted bound;
What the vast cycles of revolving spheres,
To dread eternity's unmeasur'd round?

Roll, mighty periods, your immense career,
Be suns, be stars, in flaming ruin hurl'd!
Virtue, the sun that warms the moral sphere,
Superior glows, nor fears a bursting world.

Wide as those countless orbs diffuse their blaze,
Boundless as space extends, or being flows,
No spot so dear applauding Heaven surveys,
As where the wise and virtuous dead repose.

Unfading laurels, o'er their sacred urn,
Aloft their ever-verdant foliage spread,
The Muses there eternal incense burn;
And rolling spheres their kindliest influence shed.

On their lov'd bier the morn's refulgent star,
Enamour'd, joys to dart its earliest beam;
There passing Phœbus checks his rapid car,
And lingering Cynthia sheds her latest gleam.

The loveliest roses of the breathing spring
Delight around the hallow'd sod to grow;
Bright seraphs hover near with guardian wing;
Light fall the dews, and soft the zephyrs blow.

Let tyrants, to embalm their loathsome clay,
Of half her fragrant gums Arabia drain;
Recording brass their martial feats display,
And venal marbles breathe the flatterer's strain:

Thy tomb no trophies wants, illustrious Shade!
Nor breathing brass thy virtues to proclaim;
Thine are the radiant palms which never fade,
A tower of adamant thy deathless name.

Two rival worlds, to spread thy fame contend,
To worth, to learning, and to genius just;
And Love's and Friendship's mingling tears descend,
To embalm thy memory, and bedew thy dust.

Immortal Genius! whose expansive flame,
In early youth, on Isis' banks I caught;
Whose path I follow'd up the steeps of fame,
And, by thy precepts, form'd the ripening thought;

Oh, from yon glittering orbs, thy bright abode,
Where oft, on earth, thy spirit lov'd to soar—
Whether thou mount yon lucid STAR-PAVED ROAD,
And all the burning GALAXY explore;*

* See the Dissertations of Dr. Herschel, relative to this brilliant portion of the heavens, in the Philosophical Transactions.

Or, if the northern Wain thy wing detain,
And vast Orion's more refulgent beam;
Or, darting downward to the southern main,
If Hydra* bathe thee in her blazing stream;

Where'er thou rov'st, or near the frozen pole,
Or the parch'd regions of the fervid line:
Still on this globe thine eye auspicious roll,
Nor spurn the trophies heap'd around thy shrine.

For me, in vain revolve the tuneful spheres,
No more through heaven their flaming paths I trace,
Life, one vast howling wilderness appears,
And darkness wraps creation's beauteous face.

Ah, what avails it that I caught thy fire,
Or with thy ardent spirit dar'd to soar?
With thee, ambition's fondest hopes expire,
The sacred thirst of glory burns no more.

* From ὑδωρ, water. It is one of the largest and brightest of the southern constellations, and supposed, by its convolutions, to represent the Nile at the period of inundation.

Deeper than Gothic glooms o'er Britain hang;
Where toiling Science wails her ravish'd meed;
And wounded deep, with many a secret pang,
The agonizing Muse is doom'd to bleed!

Ye bards of Britain, break the useless lyre,
And rend, disdainful, your detested bays;
Who now shall dare to letter'd fame aspire,
Devotes to penury his hapless days.

Hear slighted BUTLER his hard fate bemoan!
O'er famish'd OTWAY shed the generous tear!
Hark! frantic CHATTERTON'S expiring groan
Still vibrates dreadful on the tortur'd ear!

And are there who the glittering wreath would tear,
Immortal Genius! from thy sacred brow;
Who jealous Heav'n's avenging thunder dare,
Whence all the radiant fires of Genius flow?

Are there who, while they quaff the sparkling wines,
And load with Eastern pomp the groaning board,
Reck not that famish'd worth, unfriended pines,
And bar, with hearts of steel, th' unbounded hoard?

Ye wretched pageants of a summer's morn,
  Howe'er inshrin'd in wealth, or thron'd in power;
Genius surveys you with retorted scorn;
  Above your rage th' immortal Muses tower!

Can all the joys the genial grape inspires,
  One transport to the throbbing breast impart,
Like his—who burns with fancy's genuine fires—
  And wakes the strain that warms the bounding heart?

In dungeon glooms behold the bard sublime!
  No sufferings can repress his inborn flame;
Darkling, in chains, he pours th' indignant rhyme,
  And wanting all things, throbs alone for fame!

He knows not famine's direful pangs to feel,
  Ætherial viands feed his ardent soul;
He looks with scorn on bonds of triple steel,
  Whose spirit soars where worlds unnumber'd roll.

While thus, with honest pride my bosom glow'd,
  More vivid stream'd the lightning's dreadful glare,
In wilder waves tumultuous Ganges flow'd,
  And rolling thunders shook the turbid air!

A flood of glory from the expanding skies,
Full on the tomb of shrouded Genius play'd;
And, floating in the blaze, my raptur'd eyes
A form immortal and sublime survey'd.

The jewell'd chaplet that adorns her brow,
Her spear, resplendent as the solar flame,
Her cheek, that shames the morning's purple glow,
The sovereign GENIUS OF THE EAST proclaim!

Not that dire spectre, who, in later days,
In Asia's courts rears high her pageant shrine,
Who spurns the martial plume, and loves to blaze
In waste of diamonds from Golconda's mine:

Oh, not that bloated monster, stain'd with blood,
Who on pale harams vents her murderous rage;
To screaming infants tends th' impoison'd food,
And to the bow-string dooms enfeebled age:

That barbarous, hell-born fiend, by grim Despair
On Murder, at the midnight hour, begot—
Far hence remove her torch's baleful glare,
Nor let its blaze profane this hallow'd spot!

But she of elder birth, whose righteous sway
Asia's undaunted sons exulting own'd,
When Liberty diffus'd her halcyon day,
And Virtue rul'd the helm with Cyrus thron'd.

I know her by her lofty ostrich plume,
That dreadful wav'd on Lydia's wealthy plain,
When tyranny at Sardis found a tomb,
And haughty Babel wept her myriads slain.

I know her by her rich emblazon'd shield,
Round whose vast orb the radiant signs are roll'd.
Here Mithra's Lion spurns the blazing field;
There raging Taurus flames in sculptur'd gold.

In all the charms of martial beauty bright,
But still with brighter bays by Science crown'd,
The goddess bends to earth her rapid flight,
And consecrates to fame the hallow'd ground.

" Favour'd of Heav'n!" her awful voice exclaim'd,
" Oh! thou, by two admiring worlds deplored,
Who, with the love of Eastern lore inflam'd,
To its sublimest heights unrivall'd soar'd.

The brightest palms which Asia yields be thine,
Securely slumber on her peaceful coast;
Thy dust shall mix with chiefs of proudest line,
No nobler dust her gorgeous shrines can boast.

Thy genius dar'd the secret springs explore
Whence ancient Wisdom drank the copious stream;
Diffus'd far hence to many a barbarous shore,
And regions glowing with the western beam.

Where the dark cliffs of rugged Taurus rise,
From age to age by blasting lightnings torn,
In glory bursting from th' illumin'd skies,
Fair Science pour'd her first auspicious morn.

The hoary Parthian seers, who watch'd by night
The eternal fire in Mithra's mystic cave—
Emblem sublime of that primeval light
Which to yon sparkling orbs their lustre gave—

Exulting saw its gradual splendours break,
And swept, symphonious, all their warbling lyres,
'Mid Scythia's frozen glooms the Muses wake,
While happier India glows with all their fires.

From that stupendous tower in song renown'd,
Rear'd in the centre of her vast champaign,
Assyria, 'raptur'd, eyed the blue profound,
And class'd, in dazzling groups, the starry train;

Phœnicia, spurning Asia's bounding strand,
By the bright pole-star's steady radiance led, *
Bade to the winds her daring sails expand,
And fearless plough'd old Ocean's stormy bed.

The race who, when the burning dog-star rose,
With thundering pæans shook old Nilus' shore;
Now view'd a brighter dawn its beams disclose,
And drank, in copious draughts, the Indian lore.

From Egypt, roll'd in many a winding stream,
To Greece the tide of Eastern science flow'd;
Carthage exulting hail'd its rising beam;
In Rome its splendours, by reflection, glow'd.

* The discovery of the pole-star is ascribed to the Phœnicians, whence it is often emphatically called PHŒNICE.

Frantic with bigot rage, with blood defil'd,
A gorgeous crescent gleaming on his crest;
What furious demon, from Arabia's wild,
Hurls desolation through the ravag'd East?

A sabre drench'd with infant gore he waves,
His eyes in opium's wildest frenzy roll;
And while of sacred rites the maniac raves,
Lust and revenge pollute his guilty soul:

O'er Persia wide his myriad host he pours,
Burning for spoil, for human blood athirst;
Resistless, India, on thy fertile shores,
Tossing their flaming brands, his legions burst.

On Bactria's * hills are quench'd the sacred fires,
The Mithriac priests are on their altars slain;
The proud Sassanian dynasty expires,
And Asia bends to Othman's baleful reign.

* The principal fire-temple of the Zoroastrian sages, and the residence of the Archimagus, was at Balkh, a city situated on the confines of Persia, &c. the capital of the ancient Bactria. Balkh was taken in the 27th year of the Hegira, and of the Christian æra 647, by the Arabian general Abdallah

Through all her bounds the outcries of despair,
The shrieks of violated beauty rise;
While, blasted by his crescent's dreadful glare,
The bloom of Science and of Genius dies.

Barbarian, pause! nor with remorseless rage
The boast of Egypt to oblivion doom;
Ah, spare the toil of many a letter'd sage,
Nor bid devouring fire their works consume! *

In vain I plead; with sacrilegious flame
The glowing baths of Alexandria blaze;
Omar, eternal curses brand thy name,
And keenest lightnings fire thy wither'd bays!

Ebn Amer, when that fire-temple was destroyed, and the miserable Persees fled into Guzzurat, where, to this day, they have a fire-temple; of which species of building the reader may see an engraving in the second volume of Indian Antiquities. Concerning Balkh, and its fate, the reader may consult Al Makin Hist. Saracen. p. 37, edited by Erpenius, 1725; and Golius, in his notes upon the Astronomy of Alfraganus, p. 176. Edit. quarto, 1669.

* It should be here remembered, that Egypt was anciently considered, if not as a part of Asia, at least as most intimately connected with it by the indissoluble bonds of science and commerce. The Alexandrian library, burnt by the detestable mandate of Omar, contained 700,000 volumes, which served to heat the baths of that city, amounting to 4000 in number, for six months together.

With kindred rage, on India's ravag'd plain,
Stern MAHMOUD in a storm of fire descends,
And many a rich and venerable fane
Beneath his desolating fury bends.

Ah! not from glory's generous ardour flows
The impetuous transport of his headlong zeal:
That breast with all the rage of avarice glows,
That bosom Superstition's furies steel.

Bath'd in the streaming blood of half her kings,
And borne triumphant o'er their trampled thrones,
On plunder'd Delhi's boundless spoil he springs,
And proud Canouge beneath his vengeance groans.

Insatiate still for India's treasur'd ore,
His rapid flight the royal vulture bends,
To where, on rich Cambay's far distant shore,
The vast Sumnaut its gorgeous front extends.

In vain the priests that guard the sacred shrine,
The unconquer'd arm of guardian Veeshnu boast,
And from the towers, inflam'd with rage divine,
Thunder Heaven's vengeance on the myriad host.

Heaven's awful rage the fierce assailants brave,
Burst the strong gates, and scale the lofty walls;
The priests plunge headlong in the o'erwhelming wave,
And India's last proud sanctuary falls.

And now his raptur'd eye a fane surveys
That ransack'd Nature's dazzling treasury seems;
With plates of gold the burnish'd ceilings blaze,
One mass of jewels the rich altar gleams.*

Nor proffer'd gold, nor glowing gems suffice,
Great Veeshnu's bust his ruffian hands profane;
Rise, dreadful god, in all thy fury rise,
And give to vengeance his devoted train!

As o'er yon sultry waste his legions toil,
Who shall the pangs of burning thirst assuage?
The camels faint beneath their guilty spoil;
Through all the camp despair and madness rage!

* See a full account of this event, and this sumptuous temple, extracted from Arabian writers, in Indian Antiquities, vol. III. p. 369.

Ye hostile clarions! cease mine ear to rend,
The Arabian despot sheathes his blood-stain'd spear;
Their genial beams the cherish'd arts extend,
Their drooping heads the trampled Muses rear.

A race less fierce the Eastern sceptres wield,
By worth distinguish'd, as for science fam'd,
Who toil for glory in a bloodless field;
With loftier views, with nobler fires inflam'd.

In the bright noon of their meridian power,
Genius, the daring eagle, upward springs;
Not bolder did the undazzled Theban* tower,
Nor Mantua's† swan expand her soaring wings.

What blazing orb o'er Scythia's hills afar,
Portentous rises with ensanguin'd beam;
'Tis mighty GENGIS' inauspicious star,
Convulsing Asia with its baleful gleam!

Resistless, fearless, cruel as their clime,
I see the Tartars burst their frozen bound;
Unnumber'd banners wave in air sublime,
While crimson torrents smoke along the ground.

* Pindar. † Virgil.

Dark as the driving swarms of locusts spread,
Full many a league their gloomy front extends
The trembling earth is blasted where they tread,
And each affrighted Muse her laurel rends!

The blood of GENGIS glowing in his veins,
And bearing still a more terrific lance,
The imperial savage* of the Sogdian plains
Now bids his squadrons to the field advance.

* TIMUR BEC. There are two very celebrated, and very different histories, in the Oriental languages, of this renowned warrior, who was born at Cash, in the beautiful valley, or plain of Sogd, the ancient Sogdiana. The one is in Persian, and was composed under the inspection of Timur himself, by the Mullah Sheriffeddin Ali, a native of Yezd in Persia, whence he is frequently denominated Ali Yezdi. The other is in Arabic, and was compiled by Ahmed Ebn Arabshah, a native of Syria, and a determined enemy of the hero whose exploits he recorded. Both of them are written with all the pomp and elegance of which their respective languages are capable, and take their complexion from the temper of their writers, and the circumstances under which they were compiled. "In the first," says Sir William Jones, "the Tartarian conqueror is represented as a liberal, benevolent, and illustrious prince; in the second, as deformed and impious, of a low birth, and detestable principles." Preface to Nadir Shah, p. 22. I have both these histories in my possession. That of Ebn Arabshah, edited by Manger, Arabic and Latin, in three volumes quarto, was imported by myself for the history of the Mohammedan sovereigns of Hindostan. From these two histories, compared throughout with Timur's Institutes, edited by Dr. White and Major Davy, I have endeavoured to draw the true portrait of that ferocious hero; for whatever might have been his own *liberality* to the fawning sycophants of his court, and however *illustrious* he might

Like Nimrod, skill'd to guide the bloody chace,
His ravening lust unbounded carnage feeds;
By thousands fall the hapless sylvan race;
By myriads man, his nobler victim, bleeds.

Frantic through Asia's ravag'd vales they fly,
And wrap her towering capitals in fire!
Beneath their spears the flower of Persia die,
While age and beauty crowd the funeral pyre.

But chief on India bursts the o'erwhelming tide,
India still doom'd to feel the oppressor's rage;
Through seas of blood his crimson'd squadrons ride,
'Midst hecatombs of gasping slain engage.

With yon deep groan uncounted myriads fell!—
And now the flames from burning Delhi rise;
Loud and more loud resounds the deepening yell;
And vengeance, vengeance! echoes to the skies.

have been in arms, not all the laboured encomiums of the Persian historian shall ever convince me, that the monster who could order 100,000 captive Hindoos to be massacred in cold blood, under the walls of Delhi, and insist upon his orders being rigorously executed, could ever possess one spark of *benevolence*.

Reflection shudders at his sanguine deeds!
Fly swift, ye hours; roll round those halcyon times,
When to yon throne his lion race succeeds,
Brave as their sire, untainted by his crimes.

Arouse, ye Muses, burst your sevenfold chains,
Smite with immortal rage your noblest wires;
The great, the brave, the virtuous SHAHROC reigns,
The demon of revenge and blood expires!

Wide as the circle of his vast domains,
That know no limits, save the horizon's bound;
His sovereign power your injur'd rights maintains,
And spreads the flame he feels diffusive round!

From her deep slumber of three thousand years
The trampled Genius of Assyria wakes;
Again her head exulting Science rears;
Again thy radiant morn, fair Freedom, breaks!

Majestic, lo! on Tigris' hallow'd shore,
A second Babel seems the skies to threat;
Whence Bagdad's seers yon blazing vault explore,
And trace the mystic characters of fate.

Lo! Samarcand, a city new to fame,
Temples and towers of matchless grace displays;
Proud cloister'd domes the cherish'd arts proclaim,
While lofty gnomons mark the solar rays.*

Thou too, whose daring genius could extend
O'er heaven's majestic arch the mighty line;
Brave Tartar,† hail! thy native skies ascend,
And, 'midst thy own Fix'd Stars, for ever shine.

With pen as brilliant as his conquering sword,
A double laurel decks great BABER'S brows:
Radiant the palms embattled fields afford,
More radiant still the heavenly Muse bestows.

The loudest notes her martial trump can pour,
To mighty AKBER'S praise let glory sound!
Waft them, ye winds, round every distant shore,
Diffuse them wide as earth's remotest bound.

* I have proved, in the third volume of the Indian Antiquities, that all the obelisks of the ancient Egyptians were intended as gnomons, and therefore sacred to Osiris.

† Ulug Beg, the great astronomer, author of that stupendous work, the Tabulæ Fixarum Stellarum, edited by Hyde.

For all the virtues of his noble line,
In Akber beaming their concenter'd ray,
With all the fires of native genius join;
And India glories in his righteous sway.

Casi,* once more her sacred fires renews,
With Veeshnu's praise a thousand temples ring;
On Naugracut's vast range the soaring Muse
Smites, 'midst eternal snows, the varied string.

Exalted high on India's jewell'd throne,
Wisdom with hoary faith again unites:
No more in chains her vanquish'd princes groan,
Nor noble Brahmins wail their ravish'd rights.

Happy as when her ancient sovereigns reign'd,
Rajahs of grey renown, and dear to fame;
No more her Soobahs of their youth are drain'd,
Nor shrieking virgins feed the victor's flame.

* The ancient name of Benares. The latter name does not seem to be of very remote date in the annals of India; it is called in the Ayeen Akbery, Baranassey, a word formed of Birnah and Assey, the names of the two branches of the Ganges, between which it is situated. It is also in Sanscreet records denominated Varanes.

But cherish'd by the laws her Brahma gave,
She sees her bursting granaries o'erflow;
Unnumber'd navies stem the boisterous wave,
Unbounded treasures in her coffers glow.

Thrice happy age; how soon in blood to close;
Lo! Fate her sable banner wide unfurls!
A chief,* more fierce than all her ancient foes,
O'er her vast Deccan flames and ravage hurls.

Nor on rich Deccan's wealthy plains alone,
I see the storm on hallow'd Casi burst;
Her altars quench'd, her plunder'd fanes o'erthrown,
Her hoary grandeur trampled low in dust!

Infuriate Bigot to a barbarous creed!
Think'st thou the gods, whose fires those altars bore,
Will unreveng'd behold this impious deed,
Nor on thy race their hoarded fury pour?

By blood thy rebel arm the sceptre gain'd,
And, Tyrant, wide the crimson tide shall flow!
Dread ministers of Heaven's just wrath ordain'd,
Rise, ruthless Seyds, strike home th' avenging blow! †

* Aurengzebe.

† Aurengzebe, who died in the year 1707, left the richest and most

Hark! on Carmania's hills the trumpets sound,
And the fierce Afghan tribes to arms invite;
The thundering war steed spurns the trembling ground,
And neighs impatient for the promis'd fight.

To conquest by resistless NADIR led,
From Candahar they rush impetuous down:
High on the tyrant's burnish'd crest display'd
Gleam the rich spoils of Persia's plunder'd crown.

'Gainst veteran warriors, nerv'd with triple steel,
Thy millions, Hindostan, in vain advance;
No more thy Rajahs burn with patriot zeal,
No more, enervate, wield the ponderous lance.

powerful empire in the world to be rent asunder and convulsed to its very centre, by the ambitious contentions of his surviving offspring. India had not for ages seen two such immense armies assembled on her plains, as those which accompanied to the field his sons Azem Shah and Mahommed Mauzim, the rival competitors for his vacant throne. Both those princes perished in the contest for the sovereignty. The black and aggravated crimes, by which the father himself ascended to empire, seem to have been avenged by heaven in the successive destruction of his immediate descendants. Those formidable omrahs, the Seyds, afterwards successively dethroned or murdered five sovereigns of the royal house of Hindostan. See Fraser's Moghol Emperors, page 57.

Invincible the iron phalanx moves,
Dreadful as wasting storms, or raging fire;
Delhi, again, a victor's vengeance proves,
Again her butcher'd sons in heaps expire!

Though all Golconda flames before their eyes,
Not all Golconda can appease their rage;
Unmov'd they hear the screaming infants' cries,
Unaw'd the curses of expiring age!

Come, fierce ABDOLLAH, on her destin'd walls
Heaven's last avenging, dreadful phial pour!—
'Tis done: the imperial house of TIMUR falls;
India, thy sun descends to rise no more!

Now darkness, brooding with expanded wings,
Wraps yon vast empire in its deathful shade;
The Muses rush from their polluted springs,
And Science flies, appall'd, her favourite glade:

Triumphant Slaughter her ensanguin'd car
O'er trampled altars rolls, and ruin'd fanes;
Wide through her vallies howls the storm of war,
And famine in the bowers of Eden reigns.*

* The Douab, or interamnian region of Upper Hindostan, once the

Dear as to dungeon slaves the solar gleam,
Or wretches doom'd to dig the buried ore,
On raptur'd Casi dawns the gladsome beam,
Which British freedom, British science pour.

To chase the tenfold gloom, my JONES, was thine,
To cheer the Brahmin, and to burst his chains;
To search for latent gems the Sanscreet mine,
And wake the fervour of her ancient strains.

For oh! what pen shall paint with half thy fire,
The power of Music on the impassion'd soul,
When the great masters waked the Indian lyre,
And bade the burning song electric roll?*

The mystic veil that wraps the hallow'd shrines
Of India's deities, 'twas thine to rend;
With brighter fires each radiant altar shines,
To Nature's awful God those fires ascend.

most fertile spot of the richest country under heaven, has, by repeated wars of recent years, been converted into a perfect desert.

* The impressive title of one of the most ancient Sanscreet treatises on music is, "The Sea of Passions." See our Author's animated account of the Indian Music, in the Asiatic Researches, vol. II. p. 55.

Sound the deep conch; dread Veeshnu's power proclaim,
And heap with fragrant woods the blazing urn;
I see sublime Devotion's noblest flame
'Midst Superstition's glowing embers burn!

'Twas thine, with daring wing, and eagle eye,
To pierce antiquity's profoundest gloom;*
To search the dazzling records of the sky,
And bid the stars the sacred page illume. †

Nor did the instructive orbs of heaven, alone,
Absorb thy soul 'mid yon ethereal fields;
To thee the vegetable world was known,
And all the blooming tribes the garden yields;

From the tall cedar on the mountain's brow,
Which the fierce tropic storm in vain assails,
Down to the humblest shrubs that beauteous blow,
And scent the air of Asia's fragrant vales.

* See the two profound Dissertations on the Indian Chronology, in Asiatic Researches, vol. II. p. 111, and 389.

† Consult various astronomical passages in the treatises above-mentioned, and the discourse on the Lunar Year of the Hindus, in the same publication, vol. III. p. 249. They are all made subservient to the cause of the national theology, and the illustration of the grand truths delivered in the sacred writings.

But talents—fancy—ardent, bold, sublime—
Unbounded science—form'd thy meanest fame;
Beyond the grasp of death, the bound of time,
On wings of fire Religion wafts thy name.

And long as stars shall shine, or planets roll,
To kindred virtue shall that name be dear;
Still shall thy genius charm the aspiring soul,
And distant ages kindle at thy bier."

Thus spake the Power; and in the focal blaze,
Her dazzling shrine, her awful beauties veil'd;
From harps celestial flow'd immortal lays,
Ambrosial sweets my ravish'd sense regal'd.

And now, slow-rising on their favourite shore,
Millions of shadowy forms around me mov'd,*
Unfading garlands in their hands they bore,
And, weeping, strew'd them on the urn they lov'd.

* The Dii Minores, or inferior genii of India; being all symbolical representations, either of the powers of nature, or the attributes of God. See an ample account of them and their functions, in the Indian Mythology, in the Discourse on the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India, in Asiatic Researches, vol. II. p. 98.

Sweet was the harmonious dance, and sweet the dirge
Whose plaintive warbling lull'd the enraptur'd stream,
Till o'er the eastern mountains' farthest verge,
Aurora, rising, shot her golden beam:

Instant, with shouts, they hail'd returning light,
And sang the Power that rolls the radiant year;
Then, bending towards the sun their rapid flight,
Plung'd in the centre of his burning sphere.

THE

LOTOS OF EGYPT.

THE

LOTOS OF EGYPT.

EMBLEM sublime of that primordial Pow'r
That on the vast abyss of chaos moved;*
What pen shall paint thy charms, majestic Flow'r!
By mortals honour'd, and by Gods beloved.

From Æthiopia's lofty mountains roll'd,
Where Nile's proud stream through gladden'd Egypt pours,
In raptur'd strains thy praise was hymn'd of old,
And still resounds on Ganges' faithful shores.

* It is the nature of this celebrated aquatic plant to keep its expanded leaves perpetually floating on the surface of the water. The flower gradually unfolds itself with the rising, and closes with the setting SUN.

Within thy fair Corolla's full-blown bell,*
Long since th' immortals fix'd their fond abode;
There day's bright Source, Osiris, lov'd to dwell,
While by his side enamour'd Isis glow'd.

Hence, not unconscious to his orient beam,
At dawn's first blush thy shining petals spread;
Drink deep th' effulgence of the solar stream,
And, as he mounts, still brighter glories shed.

When, at their noontide height, his fervid rays
In a bright deluge burst on Cairo's spires,
With what new lustre then thy beauties blaze,
Full of the God, and radiant with his fires!

Brilliant thyself in stole of dazzling *white*,
Thy sister-plants more gaudy robes infold;
This flames in *purple*,—that, intensely bright,
Amid th' illumin'd waters *burns in gold*.†

* To readers not conversant with the Linnæan vocabulary, it may be necessary to observe, that, by the COROLLA, is meant that more delicate interior covering formed of the *flowers* of the plant, while its exterior covering, or CALYX, is formed of its *leaves*.

† The Lotos of Egypt, the proper subject of this poem, has a beautiful white flower. There are two other species; the one bears a bright purple, the other an intensely-yellow flower.

To brave the tropic's fiery beam is thine,
Till in the distant west his splendors fade;
Then, too, thy beauty and thy fire decline,
With morn to rise, in lovelier charms array'd.

Thus, from Arabia borne, on golden wings,
The Phœnix on the Sun's bright Altar dies;*
But, from his flaming bed, refulgent, springs,
And cleaves, with bolder plume, the sapphire skies.

What mystic treasures, in thy form conceal'd,
Perpetual transport to the sage supply;
Where Nature, in her deep designs reveal'd,
Awes wondering man, and charms th' exploring eye.

In thy prolific *vase*, and fertile *seeds*
Are traced her grand regenerative pow'rs;†
Life, springing warm, from loath'd putrescence breeds,
And lovelier germs shoot forth, and brighter flow'rs.

* The Phœnix was considered, anciently, as a symbol of the Lotos; both springing to new life from the bed on which their ashes were deposited.

† This plant, says a great mythologist, grows in the water; and amongst its broad leaves, puts forth a flower, in the centre of which is formed the *seed-vessel*, shaped like a bell or inverted cone, and punctuated on the top

Nor food to the enlighten'd mind alone;
Substantial nutriment thy root bestow'd;*
In famine's vulture fangs did Egypt groan,
From thy rich, bounteous, horn† abundance flow'd.

Hence the immortal race in Thebes revered
Thy praise the theme of endless rapture made,
Thy image on a hundred columns rear'd,
And veil'd their altars with thine hallow'd shade.

with little *cavities* or *cells*, in which the seeds grow to maturity, decay, and again shoot forth: for, the orifices of these cells being too small to let the seeds drop out, when ripe, *new plants* germinate in the places where they were formed, the bulb of the vessel serving as a matrice to nourish them, until they acquire such a degree of magnitude as to burst it open and release themselves; after which, like other aquatic weeds, they take root wherever the current deposits them. This plant, therefore, being *thus productive of itself*, and vegetating from its own matrice, without being fostered in the earth, was naturally adopted as the symbol of the productive power of the Deity upon the waters.

* The Egyptians fed on the roots, which are said by Herodotus, to grow to the size and form of an apple; and they made a kind of bread of the seeds, dried in the sun, and afterwards baked. *Herodot. Euterpe, cap.* 92.

† The stalk and seed-cup together nearly resemble a *cornucopia*, and might possibly have furnished the ancients with their first idea of that sculptural ornament: it is far more likely to have done so than the horn of Amalthea, a more recent Greek fable.

But, far beyond the bounds of Afric borne,
Thy honours flourish'd 'mid Thibetian snows;
Thy flow'rs the Lama's gilded shrines adorn,*
And Brahme and Buddha on thy stalk repose.

Where'er fair Science dawn'd on Asia's shore,
Where'er her hallow'd voice Devotion raised,
We see thee graven on the glowing ore,
And on a thousand sparkling gems emblaz'd.

Child of the Sun, why droops thy with'ring head
While high in Leo flames thy radiant sire!
With Egypt's glory is thy glory fled,
And with her genius quench'd thy native fire?

* The principal deity in Thibet, Mr. Turner informs us, is the same as the Buddha of Bengal. The Hindoos make frequent pilgrimages to the sacred places in Thibet, and the Thibetians regard and visit, with holy reverence, Benares and other sacred cities of Hindostan. In the ninth Indian Avatar, Buddha is represented sitting in the expanded calyx of the Lotos, as Brahma, in the Hindoo cosmogony, is also pourtrayed on those sculptures that represent what is directly denominated the LOTOS CREATION, to distinguish it from other creations in their extensive system of the formation and destruction of worlds. The sacred plant of the Ganges, however, in some respects differs from that of the Nile. Still the object of veneration is the LOTOS. Whence has arisen this marked resemblance in the theological opinions of two nations, so remote from each other; whence, but by tradition from their common ancestors.

Ah! direr than her desert's burning wind,*
Gaul's furious legions sweep yon ravag'd vale;
Death stalks before, grim Famine howls behind,
And screams of horror load the tainted gale.

Nile's crimson'd waves, with blood polluted roll,
Her groves, her fanes, devouring fire consumes;
But mark,—slow rising near the distant pole,
A sudden splendour all her shores illumes.

Fatal to Gaul, 'tis Britain's Rising Star
That, in the south, the bright ascendant gains,
Resplendent as her Sirius shines from far,
And with new fervours fires the Libyan plains.

A race, as Egypt's ancient warriors brave,
For her insulted sons indignant glows,
Defies the tropic storm, the faithless wave,
And hurls destruction on their haughty foes.

Exulting to his source old Nilus hears
The deep'ning thunder of the British line,
Again its lovely head the Lotos rears,
Again the fields in rainbow glories shine.

* This poem was composed about the period of the invasion of Egypt by the French.

Still wider, beauteous plant, thy leaves extend,
Nor dread the eye of an admiring Muse;
In union with the rising song ASCEND,
Spread all thy charms, and all thy sweets diffuse!

Of that bold race, beneath the Pleiads born,
To chant thy praise a northern bard aspires,
Nor with more ardour, erst, at early dawn,
The Theban minstrels smote their votive lyres.

For, oh! can climes th' excursive genius bound?
No,—'mid Siberia bursts the heav'n-taught strain;
At either pole the Muses' songs resound,
And snows descend and whirlwinds rage in vain.

Four thousand summers have thy pride survey'd,
Thy Pharoahs moulder in their marble tombs;
Oblivion's wings the pyramids shall shade,
But thy fair family unfading blooms.

Still, 'mid these ruin'd tow'rs, admir'd, rever'd,
Wave high thy foliage, and secure expand;
These vast but crumbling piles by man were rear'd,
But thou wert form'd by an Immortal hand.

With Nature's charms alone thy charms shall fade,
With Being's self thy beauteous tribe decline;
Oh! living, may thy flow'rs my temples shade,
And decorate, when dead, my envied shrine.

HINDA;

AN ARABIAN ELEGY.

HINDA;

AN ARABIAN ELEGY.

LED by the star of evening's guiding fires,
That shone serene on Aden's lofty spires,
Young AGIB trod the solitary plain,
Where groves of spikenard greet his sense in vain.
In wealth o'er all the neighbouring swains supreme,
For manly beauty, ev'ry virgin's theme;
But no repose his anxious bosom found,
Where sorrow cherish'd an eternal wound.
The frequent sigh, wan look, and frantic start,
Spoke the despair that prey'd upon his heart.
The haunts of men no more his steps invite,
Nor India's treasures give his soul delight.
In fields and deep'ning shades he sought relief,
And thus discharg'd the torrent of his grief.

'Ye happier youths! ye sportive nymphs! who rove,
'In life's enchanting spring, the bow'rs of love,

'Forgive a wretch whose feet your haunts profane,
'These haunts, where mirth and boundless rapture reign!
'But oh! this breast incessant cares corrode,
'And urge my fainting steps to death's abode!
'Joyless to me the seasons roll away,
'—Exhausted nature hurries to decay;
'Day's cheerful beams for me in vain return,
'For me the stars of heav'n neglected burn:
'In vain the flowers in wild luxuriance blow,
'In vain the fruits with purple radiance glow;
'In vain the harvest groans, the vintage bleeds,
'Grief urges grief, and toil to toil succeeds:
'Since SHE whose presence bade the world be gay,
'Whose charms gave lustre to the brightest day,
'HINDA, once fairest of the virgin train,
'Who haunt the forest, or who range the plain,
'Sleeps where the boughs of yon black cypress wave,
'And I am left to languish at her grave!

'To that dear spot, when day's declining beam
'Darts from yon shining towers a farewell gleam,
'Constant as eve, my sorrows I renew,
'And mix my tears with the descending dew,
'The last sad debt to buried beauty pay,
'Kiss the cold shrine, and clasp the mould'ring clay.

‘ Far other sounds this conscious valley heard,
‘ Far other vows these ardent lips preferr’d,
‘ When sick with love, and eager to embrace
‘ Beauties unrivall’d but by angel grace,
‘ I madden’d as I gaz’d o’er all her charms,
‘ And hail’d my HINDA to a bridegroom’s arms.
‘ I printed on her lips an hasty kiss,
‘ The pledge of ardent love and future bliss;
‘ Her glowing blushes fann’d the secret fire,
‘ Gave life to love, and vigour to desire;
‘ Then, when the tear, warm trickling down my cheek,
‘ Spoke the full language passion could not speak,
‘ Our mutual transport seal’d the nuptial rite,
‘ Heav’n witness’d, and approv’d the chaste delight—

“ Prepare, I cried, prepare the nuptial feast,
“ Bring all the treasures of the rifled east:
“ The choicest gifts of every clime explore,
“ Let Aden * yield her tributary store;
“ Let Saba all her beds of spice unfold,
“ And Samarcand send gems, and India gold,
“ To deck a banquet worthy of the bride,
“ Where Mirth shall be the guest, and Love preside.

* Aden and Saba are both cities of Arabia Felix, celebrated for the gardens and spicy woods with which they are surrounded.

" Full fifty steeds I boast of swiftest pace,
" Fierce in the fight, and foremost in the race.
" Slaves too, I have, a numerous faithful band,
" And heav'n hath giv'n me wealth with lavish hand:
" Yet never have I heap'd an useless store,
" Nor spurn'd the needy pilgrim from my door;
" And, skill'd alike to wield the crook or sword,
" I scorn the mandate of the proudest lord.
" O'er my wide vales a thousand camels bound,
" A thousand sheep my fertile hills surround;
" For her amidst the spicy shrubs they feed,
" For her the choicest of the flock shall bleed.
" Of polish'd crystal shall a goblet shine,
" The surface mantling with the richest wine;
" And on its sides with Omman's * pearls inlaid,
" Full many a tale of love shall be pourtray'd:
" Hesper shall rise, and warn us to be gone,
" Yet will we revel till the breaking dawn;
" Nor will we heed the morn's unwelcome light,
" Nor our joys finish with returning night.

" Not Georgia's nymphs can with my love compare,
" Like jet the ringlets of her musky hair:

* The sea of Omman bounds Arabia on the south, and is celebrated by the eastern poets for the beauty of the pearls it produces.

" Her stature like the palm, her shape the pine;
" Her breasts like swelling clusters of the vine;
" Fragrant her breath as Hadramut's perfume,
" And her cheeks shame the damask rose's bloom.
" Black, soft, and full, her eyes serenely roll,
" And seem the liquid mansion of her soul.
" Who shall describe her lips, where rubies glow,
" Her teeth like shining drops of purest snow?
" Beneath her honey'd tongue persuasion lies,
" And her voice breathes the strains of Paradise.

" A bower I have, where branching almonds spread,
" Where all the seasons all their bounties shed;
" The gales of life amidst the branches play,
" And music bursts from every vocal spray;
" Its verdant foot a stream of amber laves,
" And o'er it Love his guardian banner waves:
" There shall our days, our nights in pleasure glide,
" Friendship shall live when passion's joys subside;
" Increasing years improve our mutual truth,
" And age give sanction to the choice of youth."

' Thus fondly I of fancied raptures sung,
' And with my song the gladden'd valley rung.
' But Fate, with jealous eye, beheld our joy,
' Smil'd to deceive, and flatter'd to destroy;

'Swift as the shades of night the vision fled,
'Grief was the guest, and death the banquet spread.
'A burning fever on her vitals prey'd,
'Defied love's efforts, baffled med'cine's aid,
'And from these widow'd arms a treasure tore,
'Beyond the price of empires to restore.

'What have I left, what portion but despair,
'Long days of woe, and nights of endless care?
'While others live to love, I live to weep;
'Will sorrow burst the grave's eternal sleep?
'Will all my pray'rs the savage tyrant move
'To quit his prey, and give me back my love?
'If far, far hence, I take my hasty flight,
'Seek other haunts, and scenes of soft delight,
'Amidst the crowded mart her voice I hear,
'And shed, unseen, the solitary tear;
'Music exalts her animating strain,
'And beauty rolls her radiant eye in vain:
'All that was music fled with HINDA's breath,
'And beauty's brightest eyes are clos'd in death!
'I pine in darkness for the solar rays,
'Yet loath the sun, and sicken at his blaze;
'Then curse the light, and curse the lonely gloom,
'While unremitting sorrow points the tomb.

'Oh! HINDA, brightest of the black-ey'd maids,
'That sport in paradise' embow'ring shades,
'From golden boughs where bend ambrosial fruits,
'And fragrant waters wash th' immortal roots;
'Oh from the bright abodes of purer day,
'The prostrate AGIB at thy tomb survey;
'Behold me with unceasing vigils pine,
'My youthful vigour waste with swift decline;
'My hollow eye behold and faded face,
'Where health but lately spread her ruddy grace—
'I can no more—this sabre sets me free;
'This gives me back to rapture, love, and thee.
'Firm to the stroke its shining edge I bare,
'The lover's last, sad solace in despair.
'Go, faithful steel, act ling'ring nature's part,
'Bury thy blushing point within my heart?
'Drink all the life that warms these drooping veins,
'And banish at one stroke a thousand pains.
'Haste thee, dear charmer; catch my gasping breath,
'And cheer with smiles the barren glooms of death!
'Tis done, the gates of Paradise expand—
'Attendant HOURI seize my trembling hand—
'I pass the dark, inhospitable shore,
'And, HINDA, thou art mine, to part no more!'

GENIUS;

A POEM.

GENIUS,

A POEM;

CONTAINING AN APOLOGY FOR ITS

ERRORS AND ECCENTRICITIES:

WRITTEN FOR THE

ANNIVERSARY OF THE LITERARY FUND, MAY 8, 1806.

When Man's majestic form, at Nature's birth,
Rose, newly fashion'd, from the teeming earth,
Pleased with his noblest work, th' Eternal Sire
A portion of his own etherial fire
Breath'd on the senseless mass:—the kindling clay
Felt the pure flame, and bounded at the ray.
But *Life* with myriad humbler forms he shared,
For Man a nobler boon his hand prepared;
He gave him *Reason's* powers, and thro' his soul
Bade the warm current of the *Passions* roll:
Almighty Genius, then, that hand bestow'd,
And all his features with the Godhead glow'd.

Uninjur'd, unimpair'd by age or clime,
Bright as the Sun, and as its source sublime,
While Time's uncounted cycles roll away,
Fervid, immortal, flames its hallow'd ray.

Soul of the daring thought, and glowing lyre,
What shall repress its *rage*, or damp its fire!
Unchanged by climate—at the burning line,
With warmth congenial glows the Spark divine;
Mid Scythia's snows the tropic heat displays,
And pours through Lapland glooms its ardent blaze.
Now, where parch'd Afric's burning sands extend,
And raging Cancer's glowing beams descend,
In dauntless Hannibal its fires behold,
Who o'er proud Rome the Punic thunder roll'd;
'Twas Genius o'er the Alps his standard bore,
And purpled Cannæ with patrician gore!
Now, mid the darkness of the frozen pole,
Behold those fires inflame great Peter's soul.
With daring schemes of high ambition fraught,
What vast conceptions fill his labouring thought!
Of boundless empire—midst a trackless wild,
The haunt of savages, with blood defil'd!—
The stern Lycurgus forms the mighty base,
And glows to civilize a barbarous race;

In barren swamps bids tow'ring cities rise,
And Science bloom beneath Siberian skies;
With verdure clothes the rock's incumbent brow,
While at his feet th 'eternal forests bow;
O'er half the Arctic circle spreads his reign,
And with new navies crowds th' astonish'd main.

E'en Slavery's bonds its radiant beams illume,
And penetrate the dungeon's deepest gloom;
Hear laughing Terence pour his comic strains,
Hear fabling Æsop warbling in his chains;
By Genius fir'd, Columbus spreads his sails,
And a new world the adventurous chieftain hails.
By Genius led along the stormy shore,
Where round the Cape the thundering surges roar,
And raging hurricanes its surface sweep,
Undaunted Gama ploughs the Indian deep.
How bright in Nelson glow'd its ardent flame!
What splendours blaze, round Pitt's unrivall'd name!
Immortal patriots! o'er whose honour'd bier
Virtue and Britain shed th' unceasing tear!
O'er subject earth and seas 'tis GENIUS reigns,
And rolls the planets through yon azure plains.

No grov'ling native of this nether sphere,
The radiant child of Heav'n's eternal year!

Beyond the flight of vulgar thought he springs,
Nor human laws restrain his eagle wings;
But chief the Critic's frigid rules he spurns,
And with his own immortal ardour burns.

To all his bold eccentric darings kind,
The proud excesses of a lofty mind,
Those errors that from burning feelings flow,
When high the spirits, warm the pulses glow,
Nor wholly overlook, nor nicely scan—
And for his GODLIKE talents spare the MAN.
Oh! in no mean terrestrial balance weigh
The GOOD or ILL that marks his brilliant day;
But in that lofty balance hung on high,
For ever blazing in his native sky!
'Tis only in celestial *Libra* weigh'd,
GENIUS, thy dazzling merits are display'd.

Reflect—through all the radiant march of time,
Whatever great, or daring, or sublime,
Fills the vast volume of recording fame,
From GENIUS sprang, and hallow'd be its flame!

As the bright Phœnix at the solar beam
Drinks life and vigour from its parent stream,

The Phœnix GENIUS, at a fount more bright,
Quaffs the pure blaze, and beams reflected light.
Like watchful Magi guard the virgin fire,
Nor let its blaze in *penury* expire!

Would daring mortals check his bright career,
And chain to earth a native of the sphere?
Go, the sweet influence of the Pleiads bind,
Bid their mild radiance cease to bless mankind;
Or vast Orion with thy nod control,
And loose Arcturus from the gleaming pole;
The madd'ning whirlwind of the South restrain,
And with thy plummet sound the unfathom'd main,—
When Nature thus obeys thy ruling hand,
Then bend proud GENIUS to thy stern command.

Think'st thou that HE, whose soul delighted strays
In the bright tract where circling planets blaze,
Who richer treasures than Peru can boast,
Or glow on wealthy India's rubied coast,
Will bend HIS spirit of immortal birth,
To heap the treasured dross of shining earth?
Perish the thought!—Who sings the rolling sphere,
And paints the beauties of the vernal year,
Should taste, *unbought*, those bounties which it brings,
And all the sweets his muse enraptur'd sings;

For him, with Nature's richest dainties stored,
Let pamper'd Grandeur spread the sumptuous board;
For him the Summer's golden fruits should glow,
And the rich torrent of the vintage flow:
Who to the banquet gives its genuine zest,
For *him, him only* should the grape be prest.

Yours is the sacred charge, by Heav'n assign'd,
On earth to cherish this proud *Child of Mind.*
That charge how glorious! how sublime the trust!
To Heav'n be faithful,—and to Man be just.
Guard this rich gem of the celestial mine,
And bid its light to latest ages shine.
Behold, with all the glow of Genius fir'd,
For letters with unbounded zeal inspir'd,
That PRINCE—whose heart beats high for Britain's fame,
And bounds at Liberty's transporting name,
On Heav'n-born Talent sheds a cheering ray,
Auspicious promise of a brighter day?
Nor unrequited shall his bounty stream—
GENIUS rolls back the bright reflected beam;
For cherish'd fires confers sublime renown,
And with new glories gilds the British Crown.
Foster'd by You,—beneath these frozen skies,
I see new SHAKSPEARES, SPENSERS, MILTONS rise,

I hear new DRYDENS, but in manlier strain,
Resound some future GEORGE's glorious reign;
And other JONES's, if the Fates are kind,
With all their talents, all their fires combin'd,
In Orient climes uphold the British name,
And bless the FUND that nurs'd their rising flame.

A

FREE TRANSLATION

OF THE

OEDIPUS TYRANNUS

OF

SOPHOCLES;

THE NOBLEST PRODUCTION OF THE GREEK DRAMATIC MUSE.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following arduous attempt to give the finest drama of Sophocles an English dress, was commenced by me at a very juvenile period, when at Stanmore, under my revered friend and preceptor Dr. PARR: at whose august tribunal most of the Choruses were *shewed up* (to use a school term) as EXERCISES. The accustomed candour of that liberal and enlightened scholar induced him to receive with complacency, my well-intended, however inadequate efforts. The work, when finished, afterwards passed under the eye of another revered friend of my youth, Dr. SAMUEL JOHNSON, who condescended to write the Preface, and which bears internal evidence of its origin. As only a few copies were at that time printed off, it is here again, with diffidence, submitted to that public, whose indulgence my early productions have already so amply experienced.

PREFACE.

THE Tragedy of which I have attempted to convey the beauties into the English language in a free translation, stands amidst the foremost of the classical productions of antiquity. Of tragical writing it has ever been esteemed the model and the master-piece. The grandeur of the subject is not less eminent than the dignity of the personages who are employed in it; and the design of the whole can only be rivalled by that art with which the particular parts are conducted. The subject is a nation labouring under calamities of the most dreadful and portentous kind; and the

leading character is a wise and mighty prince, expiating by his punishment the involuntary crimes of which those calamities were the effect. The design is of the most interesting and important nature; to inculcate a due moderation in our passions, and an implicit obedience to that providence of which the decrees are equally unknown and irresistible.

So sublime a composition could not fail to secure the applause and fix the admiration of ages. The philosopher is exercised in the contemplation of its deep and awful morality; the critic is captivated by its dramatic beauties; and the man of feeling is interested by those strokes of genuine passion which prevail in almost every page—which every character excites, and every new event tends to diversify in kind or in degree.

The three grand unities of time, place, and action, are observed with scrupulous exactness. However complicate its various parts may on the first view appear, on a nearer and more accurate examination, we find every thing useful, every thing necessary; some secret spring of action laid open, some momentous truth inculcated, or some important end promoted: not one scene is superfluous, nor is there one Episode that could be retrenched. The successive circumstances of the play arise gradually and naturally one out of the other, and are connected with such inimitable judgment, that if the smallest part were taken away, the whole would fall to the ground. The principal objection to this tragedy is, that the punishment of Oedipus is much more than adequate to his crimes: that his crimes are only the effect of his ignorance, and that

consequently the guilt of them is to be imputed not to Oedipus, but Apollo, who ordained and predicted them, and that he he is only *Phœbi reus*, as Seneca expresses himself. In vindication of Sophocles, it must be considered that the conduct of Oedipus is by no means so irreproachable as some have contended: for though his public character is delineated as that of a good king, anxious for the welfare of his subjects, and ardent in his endeavours to appease the gods by incense and supplication, yet we find him in private life choleric, haughty, inquisitive; impatient of controul, and impetuous in resentment. His character, even as a king, is not free from the imputation of imprudence, and our opinion of his piety is greatly invalidated by his contemptuous treatment of the wise, the benevolent, the sacred Tiresias. The rules

of tragic art scarcely permit that a perfectly virtuous man should be loaded with misfortunes. Had Sophocles presented to our view a character less debased by vice, or more exalted by virtue, the end of his performance would have been frustrated; instead of agonizing compassion, he would have raised in us indignation unmixed, and horror unabated. The intention of the poet would have been yet more frustrated on the return of our reason, and our indignation would have been transferred from Oedipus to the gods themselves—from Oedipus, who committed parricide, to the gods who first ordained, and then punished it. By making him criminal in a small degree, and miserable in a very great one, by investing him with some excellent qualities, and some imperfections, he at once inclines us to pity and to condemn. His

obstinacy darkens the lustre of his other virtues; it aggravates his impiety, and almost justifies his sufferings. This is the doctrine of Aristotle and of nature, and shews Sophocles to have had an intimate knowledge of the human heart, and the springs by which it is actuated. That his crimes and punishment still seem disproportionate, is not to be imputed as a fault to Sophocles, who proceeded only on the ancient and popular notion of Destiny; which we know to have been the basis of Pagan theology.

It is not the intention of the Translator to proceed farther in a critical discussion of the beauties and defects of a Tragedy which hath already employed the pens of the most distinguished commentators; which hath wearied conjecture, and exhausted all the

arts of unnecessary and unprofitable defence. This work will be found by the reader, what it is called by the writer, a *free* translation. The Author was not fettered by his text, but guided by it; he has, however, not forgotten the boundaries by which liberal translation is distinguished from that which is wild and licentious. He has always endeavoured to represent the sense of his original, he hopes sometimes to have caught its spirit, and he throws himself without reluctance, but not without diffidence, on the candour of those readers who understand and feel the difference that subsists between the Greek and English languages, between ancient and modern manners, between nature and refinement, between a Sophocles who appeals to posterity, and a writer who catches at the capricious taste of the day.

THE ARGUMENT.

OEDIPUS, the supposed son of POLYBUS, King of Corinth, leaves the palace of his father upon a reflection thrown on his birth by a courtier, to consult the oracle at Delphi concerning his parents. In his journey he meets LAIUS, King of Thebes, his real father, but unknown to him, in a narrow avenue, and being opposed by him, kills him and his attendants. He afterwards solves the riddle of the Sphynx, a monster that laid the country of Thebes waste with her ravages, and, as his reward, is promoted to the throne, vacant by the death of LAIUS, and to the bed of JOCASTA, his own mother. A dreadful pestilence rages among the Thebans, and, CREON being sent to consult the oracle, brings back this answer. "That, when they shall have banished the murderer of LAIUS, then resident among them, the plague should cease." OEDIPUS, anxious to discover the offender, and to revenge his death, denounces the most solemn curses both against the culprit and those who conceal him. After variety of investigation, OEDIPUS himself is discovered to be the murderer. In his rage he tears out his eyes, and JOCASTA, unable to bear the reflection of her impurity, destroys herself.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Oedipus, - -	King of Thebes.
Jocasta, - - -	Wife of Oedipus.
Creon, - - -	Brother to Jocasta.
Tiresias, - -	A blind Prophet of Thebes.

Corinthian Shepherd.
Shepherd formerly belonging to Laius.
Messenger.
High Priest of Jupiter.

CHORUS. Consisting of the Priests and ancient Men of Thebes, Theban Youths and Children of Oedipus.

SCENE. The Area before the Palace of Oedipus; where the Priests are assembled before the Altars.

Chesman sculp.

SOPHOCLES.

Apud Fulvium Ursinum in marmore.

OEDIPUS TYRANNUS.

ACT I.

OEDIPUS, THE PRIEST, CREON, CHORUS.

OEDIPUS.

OFFSPRING of ancient Cadmus, wherefore thus
With suppliant branches press you round our palace?
The temples smoak with incense, all our streets
Resound with mournful pæans, and with bursts
Of frantic woe—Behold your prince himself,
Ev'n Oedipus, by ev'ry tongue renown'd,
Anxious, impatient, hastes to learn the cause
Of these commotions: Say, thou rev'rend seer,
Whose years and wisdom claim my first regard,
Say, what disasters, what unseen distress
Involve my people: have the wrathful gods
Pour'd down their vengeance for some hidden crime,

Or hath some plunderer laid your city waste?
Say, for this arm shall yield you from his rage,
Or added incense soothe offended Jove.
Steel'd were this heart, and ill should I deserve
To wear the crown a grateful nation gave,
Did I not sympathise in all their griefs,
And risk my life and safety for their welfare.

Priest. Prince of this wretched land, thine eyes behold
What prostrate throngs around these altars poured,
Implore thy succour from the jaws of death.
Her unfledg'd infant train their feeble hands
Here suppliant stretch; there bend her chosen youth
Renown'd in war—the venerable race
To these succeed, who guard our sacred rites,
Hoary with age and grief: the priest of Jove
Bows prostrate at thy feet—O king, attend
Thy subjects cries, who rush in myriad throngs
To where the temples of Minerva* rise,
And where Ismenus her prophetic stream
Rolls by Apollo's shrine: their sacred boughs
Waving in air and weary heav'n with plaints.
† Our ancient city, like a shatter'd wreck,

* In Thebes there were two temples of Pallas; one in honour of Minerva the Assister; the other in honour of the Ismenian Minerva.

† This comparison of a state, struggling under calamity, to a ship in distress, is to be met with in many both of the Greek and Roman classics:

When all the fury of the tempest rages,
Sinks in the flood that swells to overwhelm her.
A savage pestilence with horrid strides
Stalks through our streets, and rushing from the skies
Avenging Phœbus scatters o'er the land
His burning arrows—while the gloomy grave,
Enrich'd with groans and death, exults to view
Such myriads croud his desolate domain!
Parch'd by the blast the ripening harvest dies,
Our fields are strew'd with putrid carcases
That lie unburied, and still wider spread
The foul contagion—dismal screams are heard
Of women labouring with untimely birth,
Who curse the monstrous product of their womb!
O! second only to the immortal Gods
In wisdom and in might, extend thy arm
To save our sinking race—arise, O prince,
Shine forth, as when thy glorious presence burst
The Sphynx's dark ænigma,* and restored
From death and servitude our drooping souls,

it occurs again in the speech of Jocasta at the opening of the third Act, or what the critics call so, for this division into acts was unknown to the Grecian stage.

* For the benefit of that class of readers who may be less conversant in the ancient mythological history of Greece, it may be necessary just to observe, that the SPHYNX was a fabulous monster, to whom the poets have assigned various parts of the human and bestial frame; as the face of a *woman*, the body of a *dog*, the tail of a *serpent*, the wings of a *bird*, and

To life, to health and safety—Prince, to thee
We raise our anxious eyes; once more be call'd
The saviour of our race; in this dark hour,
If thy prophetic skill may aught avail:
For oft the counsels of the wise avert
The threaten'd ill. Let not oblivion shade
Thy former godlike deeds. This city stands
The great recording herald of thy fame:
Act like thyself; and know, illustrious sire,
A kingdom's strength consists not in extent
Of vast domains, and bulwarks rais'd to heav'n;
The people are its strength, and when these fail,
Its fleets are useless, and its bulwarks vain.

Oed. Alas! my sons, ye urge not your complaints
Unknown or unregarded—well I know
The various labours that oppress the state:
Nor hath your sov'reign borne amidst you all
The slightest share of woe. Still have I felt
For every pang the meanest subject knows.
This breast, where all your cares a center find,

the talons of a *lion*, together with a human voice. She is said to have been sent by Juno to annoy the detested progeny of Cadmus, and spread her ravages far and wide around the neighbourhood of Thebes, devouring all those who were unable to expound her ænigmas. Oedipus alone was equal to the task; when the monster, in despair, dashed out her brains against a rock. It would be a waste of time to enter into farther explanation on this subject, though ingenious theories relative to it have not been wanting.

Feels no repose, but bears an empire's toils.
Whether by night upon my couch I lie,
Or throng'd in regal pomp, all-seeing Jove!
Witness the tears I shed, the sighs I pour.
How rove my thoughts in mazy wand'rings lost,
Some med'cine to explore for bleeding Thebes.
What prudence bade I fail'd not to perform
With early speed—to Delphi's shrine I sent
Creon, my noble relative and friend,
To seek of Jove, what dark unpurg'd offence
Hath stain'd the land; what offering may atone,
And mitigate the wrath of angry heav'n—
My soul is big with terror while I wait
The God's decree: the time of his return
Is near elaps'd, and may the curse be mine
If I not execute in all its force
The dread behest.—

Priest. Auspicious are thy words;
These youths pronounce, that Creon is arriv'd.

Oed. O great Apollo! Grant his chearful looks
Be the fair omen of thy smile restor'd.

Priest. Thus may we well divine, for bright indeed
His aspect; and around his temples wave
The joyful laurels.*

* When the person, who was sent to consult the oracle, returned crowned with laurel, it was a sign of his having received a favourable answer.

Oed. What his tidings, soon
He will himself unfold; illustrious prince,
What answer bear'st thou from the shrines of Delphi?
Cre. Most happy, if the voice of wisdom guide
The sons of Thebes: the storm that now impends,
Threat'ning her overthrow, will soon subside.
Oed. Mysterious are thy words; my anxious mind
Fluctuates 'midst doubt and terror.
Cre. If my liege
Command me to declare the will of Jove,
Before this great assembly, I obey—
Or in the private chambers of the palace,
Will to his ear unfold the dire decree
Thunder'd from Delphi's rock.
Oed. Declare aloud
The will of Jove—
Cre. Hear then—High Jove commands us
To drive from out our land the baleful source
Of these calamities, nor nourish more
A WRETCH, ACCURST BY ALL THE POW'RS OF HEAV'N.
Oed. What wretch?—declare, how shall we soothe his rage?
Cre. Let banishment, or instant death arrest
His guilty steps—'tis blood, 'tis blood, my friends,
A murder'd king's unexpiated blood,
Hath laid our country waste.
Oed. Whose blood? Explain
This dark and hideous mystery—

Cre. Know, dread Prince,
Ere thou wast seated on the throne of Thebes,
Laius our monarch held the reins of empire.
Oed. Report hath told me so; I knew him not.
Cre. This prince unjustly slain, the Pow'rs above
Command us to avenge, and drag to light
The base assassins—
Oed. Ha! where lurk the traitors?
How shall we trace this foul and murd'rous deed
To its dark source?—but say, where fell the Prince?
Cre. In this same land he fell; let guards be sent
T' explore the country, lest he 'scape by flight—
Our early vigilance may save an empire.
Oed. Declare the time and manner of his death;
Each circumstance recall to mind—in Thebes
Met he this fate, or in a foreign land?
Cre. He went (as was reported) to consult
Some distant oracle, but ne'er return'd
To fill his vacant throne—
Oed. But did no slave,
No messenger of all his train return,
To spread these tidings of your sov'reign's death?
Cre. One only 'scap'd by flight, the rest all fell,
Amidst the general slaughter: him his fright
Permitted but in memory to retain
One trivial circumstance.

Oed. Say, what was that?
One glimmering spark may light us on our way
Thro' all this maze of guilt.
Cre. That robbers slew him:
He fell not by a single ruffian's hand,
But by the power of multitudes combin'd.
Oed. How—would a band of robbers dare a deed,
Of such atrocious guilt?
Cre. Such his report—
But thus unaided, unaveng'd, expir'd
The best of princes.
Oed. Why explored you not,
With stricter scrutiny, this deed of blood?
Cre. 'Twas then the monster Sphynx to Thebes proposed
Her dire ænigma, and remoter cares
Were buried in the sense of present ills.
Oed. This still more dire ænigma to resolve,
And to their dark retreats the authors trace
Of this foul parricide, the charge be mine—
But, first, our duteous homage let us pay
All-seeing Phœbus! to thy searching beam.
To thee, O Creon! next, th' obedient herald,
Of Jove's high will, our ardent thanks are due!
Thebans, dismiss your fears—in me, once more,
Behold the bulwark of your falling state.
This arm shall drag the traitor from his covert;

Thy murder'd sov'reign, Thebes, shall be avenged—
Soon may the daring regicides attempt
To murder me, my children, or my queen.
Arise, my sons, and henceforth throw aside
Your suppliant boughs—Before these glowing altars
Let heralds summon all the race of Cadmus.
Phœbus our guide, together will we raise
Our heads triumphant, or together sink
In undistinguish'd ruin.*

Priest. Yes, my sons,
Arise, since thus our monarch hath resolv'd:
May that immortal Power, whose awful voice
Utter'd the prophecy, descend from Heav'n,
Avenge our cause, and save expiring Thebes.

* Although it is not my wish to load these pages with accumulated notes, especially after the very pertinent observations in the preface on the character of Oedipus—a character adorned with many bright qualities, but shaded with many defects—yet a few occasional remarks, as we proceed, on the prominent virtues and vices which that character displays, may greatly tend to elucidate the design of Sophocles, in the composition of this noble and instructive drama. The *piety* of this unfortunate prince is here not less eminently conspicuous in his anxiety to pay implicit obedience to the sacred mandate of Apollo, than his *justice* in his strenuous exertions to punish the foul crime of murder, and his *zeal*, the zeal of a *patriot king*, to relieve his suffering subjects from the dreadful calamities that oppressed his country and kingdom, in consequence of that murder. What horror is afterwards excited in the mind, when, after a train of the most painful investigation, he himself is discovered to be the destined victim of the vengeance thus awfully denounced by his own lips against the *murderer of Laius?*

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Immortal, high, harmonious strain!
That arm'd with awful terrors from above,
In thunder burst from Delphi's fane,
Bearing to Thebes the dread command of Jove:
Thy sounds with horror fill my throbbing breast.
To thee our sorrowing pæans rise,
Patron and parent of the healing art—
DELIAN! O quickly cleave the skies.
Arm'd with thy quiver, thy unerring dart,
And purge our city from this raging pest.

ANTISTROPHE I.

Daughter of hope, fair child of light,
What great events in time's dark womb conceal'd,
Are now emerging to our sight;
Or wait the circling hours to be reveal'd?
Thee, Pallas, thee, the guardian of our land,
We first invoke, and thee, whose shrine,
Fills our extended forum's ample space,
With these thine aid far-darting Phœbus join:
Haste, haste, auspicious, to our sinking race;
Pierce the dark fiend, and stay his wasteful hand.

STROPHE II.

The pride of Thebes is levell'd with the ground,
The fruits of earth lie blasted on the plain:
Her palaces with shrieks of death resound,
And her streets groan beneath the heaps of slain.
So wide hath spread the monster's fiery rage,
Beauty's flush'd cheek with fatal crimson burns;
From her wild eye pernicious lightning glares:
Ev'n virtue's hallow'd plaint the tyrant spurns;
The screaming infant from the bosom tears,
And strikes to earth the hoary scalp of age.

ANTISTROPHE II.

The mother with convulsive tortures torn,
Faints 'midst her pains, and languishes in death.
Her hapless infant curst as soon as born,
Imbibes pollution with his earliest breath.
But hark! in louder bursts the pæans break;
The shores will wilder acclamations ring,
Mad with the flames that revel thro' their blood.
Increasing throngs around our altars cling,
And swift as rapid fire, or torrent flood,
By myriads rush to Lethe's gloomy lake.

STROPHE III.

Bright offspring of the Thunderer hear;
Hear Pallas, from thy central throne of light,
Seize thy dread shield, thy mighty spear,
And hither, O! direct thy rapid flight.—
Enthron'd on high, with ruin by his side,
This ravager, who spurns the mail of war,
Hath slain thy people, and thy groves defil'd.—
O! dash him from his fiery car,
Drive him far hence to Scythia's rocky wild,
Or deep ingulph him in the Thracian tide.

ANTISTROPHE III.

But chief, dread ruler of the skies!
Bare thou thine arm, with keener lightnings red,
Omnipotent! in vengeance rise.
And let those lightnings blast his impious head.
Monarch of Lydia, stretch thy mighty hand,
Bid thy unconquer'd shafts the monster rend;
O thou, whose darts Lyceum's summits fire,
O Bacchus, crown'd with chaplets, hither bend—
Bacchus, who lov'st to join the madd'ning quire,
Rush on th' accursed god,* and drive him from the land.

* Ἀπότιμον ἐν θεοῖς θεόν. A god accurst among the gods. *

* The other gods ought to have expelled him from Olymp

ACT II.

OEDIPUS, CHORUS, TIRESIAS.

OEDIPUS.

WHATE'ER my subjects justly can demand,
To grant is my ambition: therefore hear
My words obedient; so shall we obtain
Relief from heav'n, and expiate our offence.
I knew not till this day the dire event,
Not ev'n report had told me; but there seem
Some sure, tho' secret traces, that may lead
To full detection of this monstrous crime.—
Hear then this last resolve, which I, your king,
(Who glory in the name of citizen)
To all the citizens of ample Thebes
Aloud proclaim.—If any subject know
By whom the son of Labdacus was slain,
'Tis my command that instant he reveal
The fatal secret: let not dread of death
Restrain him, for the murd'rer shall not die:
His exile shall alone suffice to pay

The debt of vengeance; if by foreign hand
His blood was spilt, whoever brings to light
The traitorous parricide the sons of Thebes
With lavish honours shall reward his zeal.
But if, from friendship, or whatever cause,
He screen the murderer, let him ponder well
His dreadful doom.—We further then command
That none thro' all our wide domain receive
A monster so defil'd: that none hold converse,
In word or action, with him: drive him out
From all your temples: let him not approach
Your solemn sacrifices, but pursue, pursue,
With loudest execrations thro' the land
The universal pest—this awful curse
The god of Delphi thunders on his head!
If some bold ruffian singly dar'd the deed,
Or leagued with numbers, be they still accurst—
May poverty exhaust their weary lives;
The sports of pain, and victims of disease!
If in this palace I conceal the traitor,
Show'r down, ye heav'ns, these curses on the head
Of Oedipus, and all his perjur'd race.
Not heav'n alone, the virtues of your king
Command this tribute; I am bound to pay
The debt of ample justice to his manes.
I, who enjoy his scepter and his bed,

And, had not unrelenting fate oppos'd
His fond desires, had shar'd his * children too—
Urg'd by a son's regard, I will avenge
This best of princes: smile, ye mighty names,
That laid the basis of this tow'ring empire,
Cadmus, Agenor, for I *will* avenge
The blood of your descendant.—Are there yet,
Among the sons of Thebes, who wish to screen
So base a parricide: thou parent earth!
Ope not the treasures of thy fruitful womb
To this ungrateful race: curst be their beds,
And barren—curst the produce of their toil,
Till the same fate shall crush their impious heads.
Justice divine, and ye immortal powers!
Who guard the innocent, assist our cause,
The cause of virtue and of injur'd kings.

Cho. Prince, may each curse thy lips have now pronounced,
Alight on me, if, conscious to the fact,
I screen the murderer, or abet his cause.
But the bright Power, who utter'd the decree,
Can best explain its meaning.

Oed. Just, O sage:
But if the god incline not to reveal it,

* The introduction of this circumstance has a striking effect: Laius had a child, and that child was Oedipus; though his being exposed was kept as secret as his birth.

Who shall extort the secret from a power
Arm'd with omnipotence?

Chor. Will then my liege
Attend an old man's counsel?

Oed. Speak, if aught
Thy mind conceives, of import to the state.

Chor. In wisdom equall'd by the gods alone,
The hoary seer, Tiresias, may unfold
Its hidden purport.

Oed. Creon thus advised—
And messengers have twice been sent to summon
The rev'rend prophet; at his strange delay
I wonder much.

Cho. 'Tis well; for other tales,
Various and vague are rumour'd of his death.

Oed. What are they, say? For I should know them all
To judge aright.

Cho. They say the prince was slain
By travellers.

Oed. This hath likewise reach'd my ears;
But who hath yet appear'd to prove the fact?

Chor. If he exist on earth, thy menaces
Will force the conscious villain to confess.

Oed. Whoever dar'd the execrable deed
Will not be startled at the impending curse.

Cho. But this way, lo! they lead the holy seer,
Who can alone disclose the fatal truth.—

Oed. All-wise Tiresias! Thou, whose mighty mind
Can pierce the dark, mysterious depths of fate,
Whatever in the womb of night, unborn,
Or what, amidst the great decrees of heav'n,
Lies hid from mortal ken—tho' dim the rays
Of outward sight, yet well thy mental eye
Beholds the toils of Thebes, whose anxious sons
Call thee to be their saviour: for when late
We sought at Delphi's shrine the will of Jove,
Thus spake the eternal voice—" With instant death
" Or everlasting exile, fine the wretch
" That murder'd Laius: this command obey'd,
" The plague shall cease to desolate your land.'
O! therefore, if thy sage, prophetic skill,
From birds or ominous signs can aught divine,
From swift destruction snatch thyself and Thebes—
Avenge a murder'd prince; and thy reward
Reap in a nation's pray'rs, and those pure joys
The virtuous feel, in aiding the distrest.

Tir. How fatal knowledge proves, when thus to know
Is to be doubly wretched! when, to speak,
And to be silent, are alike the source
Of bitterest grief! O had I ne'er approach'd—

Oed. What dreadful secret labours in thy breast,
Darkening thy brow!

Tires. Dismiss me from thy presence;
Thy future peace and mine depend upon it.

Oed. 'Twere base ingratitude to Thebes, who bore
And nourished thee, to hide the will of Jove
At this dread crisis—

Tires. Rash, rash prince, forbear,
Lest I too suddenly that will disclose.

Oed. O by the gods reveal it, if thou know'st;
Suppliant we all beseech thee.

Tires. Urge no more
The knowledge of those woes that, ah! too soon
Will burst upon thee.

Oed. How? Know'st thou our fate,
Yet seal'st thy lip in silence; thus betraying
Thy prince and country?

Tires. Yes, my lips *are* seal'd:
Beware thy base suspicions tempt me not
To break that silence.—

Oed. I can hold no longer—
Traitor, since thou art deaf to our entreaties,
Thou shalt reveal it, for I'll force it from thee.*

* Here we have the first specimen of that unhappy resentful impetuosity of temper, and that dictatorial conduct in Oedipus, which are intended to prepare the reader to behold his future dreadful sufferings with less poignant grief than he otherwise would have beheld them. Tiresias, at his first entrance into the royal presence, respectful, diffident, and reluctant, from compassionate motives, to declare the portentous secret with which his bosom labours, becomes progressively irritated, until at length he pronounces his doom with all the majesty of an inspired prophet, provoked to just indignation by the contemptuous treatment, and base suggestions of the royal Delinquent.

Tires. Thou blamest my conduct; heedless that thy own
Ungovernable temper least becomes
This sacred place.

Oed. Who can restrain his rage,
That sees thee treat, with insolent contempt,
A nation's cries?

Tires. What, in the book of fate,
The hand of Jove hath grav'd, shall come to pass,
Tho' I remain in everlasting silence.—

Oed. But duty to thy country calls upon thee
To speak her doom.

Tires. Still let thy tongue rail on;
Thy fiercest rage shall never tear it from me.

Oed. I then will speak—for if aright I judge,
Thyself wert conscious to this deed of horror:
Nay, farther, had those eyes retain'd their light,
Wouldst with thine own base hand have dealt the blow.

Tir. Hear me, proud prince; the curse thou hast pronounc'd
On thine own head recoils—MURDERER, avaunt—
For from this day, this day of thy disgrace,
The meanest slave shall spurn thee as profane,
Accurst by heav'n, and sacred to its rage.

Oed. Miscreant, and hop'st thou for this daring insult
To go unscourg'd?

Tires. Tyrant, I scorn thy threats;
Truth is my fortress, and, against thy power,

Girds me, as with a coat of adamant.—

Oed. But tell me from what source thy knowledge springs.
From thy prophetic art?

Tires. Nay, from thyself:
Thy haughty treatment forced me to reveal it.

Oed. Once more then with the sound refresh my soul.

Tires. Wilt thou provoke me farther; was my meaning
Hid in ambiguous phrase?

Oed. Nay, but repeat
Thy wonderous tale.

Tires. I tell thee then again,
Thou art that WRETCH, that MURDERER whom thou seek'st—

Oed. By heav'ns, thou shalt not twice insult thy prince
And go unpunish'd.

Tires. Should I tell thee more,
How would'st thou madden!

Oed. Speak it all, for all
Is one damn'd forgery—

Tires. Know, unholy fires
Within that foul, unconscious bosom burn:
Nor heed'st thou that the partner of thy joys
Shall prove ere long the source of bitterest woes.

Oed. Still shall thy tongue spit forth its dark abuse
Against thy sovereign—

Tires. I regard thee not,
While truth remains my shield.

Oed. Traitor, thou ly'st—
Truth never harbour'd in so base a soul;
Blacken'd by every crime, and, like thy form,
Involv'd in total night.

Tires. Beware the taunt,
That soon, with triple force, shall fall on thee—

Oed. Thy blindness is thy safeguard, or long since
This arm had punish'd thy abuse with death.

Tires. Still I defy thee, for thy murderous sword
Shall never drink *my* blood—The gods protect me.

Oed. Was this base falsehood forg'd by thee or Creon?

Tires. By neither; as thy fate too soon shall prove—

Oed. Painful pre-eminence of wealth and power,
And wisdom, last, best, noblest gift of heav'n!
Since envy thus pursues to blast the steps
Of all that's fair or excellent on earth:
This crown, unsought by me, which grateful Thebes
Placed on my brow, that basest of mankind,
Creon, whom late I deem'd my firmest friend,
Would ravish from me, and hath here suborn'd
This curst magician, this vile son of fraud,
This wily, wand'ring, subtle hypocrite,
This base impostor—* blind to ev'ry sense
But that of gain—with crimes of blackest die

* —Ὅστις ἐν τοῖς κέρδεσιν
Μόνον δέδορκε.—

To load my name, and sully all my glory!
Tell me, thou vaunting prophet, where wast thou
When the fell Sphynx her dark mysterious song
Propos'd to Thebes: speak, dotard, for to solve
Her dire ænigma, ask'd, methinks, at least
A prophet's pow'r—Then Oedipus arose,
And, without aid of dreams, or auguries,
But by the native vigour of a soul
That pierces thine, and Creon's dark designs,
Whose bold ambition aims to seize my crown,
Solv'd the dire riddle—but beware, impostor,
Thou and thy traitor friend, I say, beware!
Or dearly ye shall rue the wild attempt.
And did not years protect thee from my rage,
I should, ere now, have taught thee how to rouse
The wrath of kings—

Cho. If to decide be mine,
Ye both are heated with intemperate warmth,
Heav'n can alone decide; let then our prayers,
United seek the succour of the gods.

Tires. What, tho' a mighty empire wait thy nod,
A monarch is but man, and I, *as man*,
Am not inferior to the proudest prince.
Nor thee nor Creon, 'tis the gods I serve:
But since my *blindness* wakes thy insult—hear
A tale shall shake thy inmost soul with horror—

Know then, a tenfold darkness veils thy mind,
And tho' thine eyes now drink the noontide ray,
The time is near when they shall quench their orbs
In everlasting night! BLIND WRETCH, thou knowest not
The long, long train of black calamities,
Whose scorpion stings shall wake thee into madness—
Thou know'st not that incestuous transports stain
Thy guilty couch, and that a father's blood
Calls from the grave for vengeance—that thy plaints
Of frantic woe, shall ring thro' ev'ry shore,
And ev'ry mountain * a CITHÆRON prove!
Serene † indeed, and steady was the gale
That bore thy swelling sails to Thebes's throne,
And to Jocasta's bed: vainly thou hop'st
To anchor there in undisturb'd repose.
The port thou ridest in with such pomp of sail,
Shall wreck thee: once more give thee back
To all the madness of the hurricane!

* Cithæron was the mountain on which Oedipus was exposed. There is a horrid grandeur, and local propriety in the original here, which could not be well expressed in a translation. I have ventured to give it literally.

† To translate this passage with spirit and delicacy was no very easy task: the passage literally runs thus—"When thou shalt have discovered that marriage, into which thou hast sailed with a fortunate gale, where thou didst expect joy and safety, other, yes, other evils yet impend, that shall at once equal thee to thyself and thy children." The obscurity is less horrid in the original, than the translation.

Thy children too—thy *children* did I say!
Thy *brethren*—they with curses shall repay
Thy love, when they shall find themselves allied
By guilty ties; from the same impious stem
Equally sprung.—Now let thy wanton tongue
Exhaust its rage on Creon, and on me:
I'll bear it all, but still I tell thee, Prince,
The sun beholds not in its wide survey,
A wretch so guilty, so accurst as thou art.

Oed. I will not further bear thy insolence,
Begone—haste from my presence, or by heav'n—

Tires. I came not here unsummon'd.

Oed. Think'st thou then,
I sent for thee, base miscreant, to insult me?

Tires. Thou deem'st me fool and mad; far otherwise
Thy *parents* thought.*

Oed. What say'st thou? hah! my *parents*—
Whom may I call by that dear name?

Tires. No more:
This day that gives thee life, shall prove to thee
The day of death—

Oed. What deep obscurity
Involves thy ev'ry speech?

* The artful mention, in this place, of his *parents* is a master-stroke of Sophocles, and has an electrifying effect both on Oedipus and the audience.

Tires. But thou, perhaps,
Who solv'd the Sphynx's riddle, may'st unfold
Their mystery.—
Oed. Dost thou dare reproach me, priest,
With what will ever be my greatest triumph?
Tires. That triumph seals thy ruin—
Oed. Hail then, Ruin!
I'll glory in my fall, since by that fall
I've sav'd a nation.
Tires. Glory then; farewell!
Boy, lead me hence—
Oed. Aye, lead the dotard hence,
He but distracts our counsels.
Tires. Prince, I go;
But, ere I take of thee my last adieu,
I will, in less mysterious terms, unfold
Why came THIS DOTARD *hither*—Know once more,
The man on whom thy lips have thunder'd forth
Such dreadful execrations, stands among us.
Nor did a foreign country give *him* birth,
At Thebes he drew his breath; that mark thou well—
And mark—the day of vengeance is at hand.
Tho' now he riot in the spoils of wealth,
And shine in regal pomp, he shall not long—
Blindness, and toil, and penury are his lot,
To waste his days in barren solitudes:

And, bending on a staff, implore relief
From passing travellers, who shall spurn him from them,
As one accurst—a blot in nature's page—
One, whom his own polluted race may call
Their FATHER and their BROTHER; she who bore him,
Her CHILD and HUSBAND, and his murder'd sire,
A SON INCESTUOUS, AND A PARRICIDE—
Now go within thy palace—well revolve
Each word: and if one word, one circumstance
Fail, and convict me of imputed falsehood;
My art prophetic scorn, my threats defy.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Where lurks the murd'rous child of guilt,
By whose dark hand a monarch's blood was spilt?
On whose devoted, impious head
The Delphic rock its deepest curse hath shed.
Now let him mock in flight the rapid steed,
Mount * the swift storm, or seize the light'ning's speed;
For, arm'd with all the wrath of Jove,
Whose bolts of fire the redd'ning æther rend,
Apollo rushes from above,
And rav'ning destinies his steps attend.

* ἀελλοποδων ἵππων; horses whose feet are like storms in swiftness.

ANTISTROPHE I

Where steep Parnassus, wrapt in snow,
Rears 'midst incumbent heav'n his hoary brow:
Thence came the mandate of the god
To drag the monster from his drear abode:
Whether in rocks and caves, with wand'ring feet,
Like the lone * bull he seek his dark retreat.
Vain hope! his vengeful hand to fly,
That hand which guides the stedfast universe;
To shun the light'ning of that eye
Whose searching beams its inmost centre pierce.

STROPHE II.

What sounds of horror strike mine ear?
The awful voice of yon prophetic seer:
Tidings of death to Thebes they bring,
Denouncing vengeance to her hapless king.

* This idea of a solitary bull is, in the original, peculiarly forcible; Virgil likewise, with the utmost delicacy and pathos, describes the wanderings of the despairing bull—

——————— Sed alter
Victus abit, longeque ignotis exulat oris. Vide 3d Georg. 225.

And again,

Dura jacet pernox, instrata saxa cubili.

Within my breast conflicting passions roll,
Terror and doubt alternate shake my soul.
How by our monarch's hand could Laïus bleed,
A stranger to that monarch's eyes;
Uninjur'd, unprovok'd, by word or deed?
My bosom spurns the base surmise.

ANTISTROPHE II.

The powers who search the human heart,
They can alone the dreadful truth impart;
While sway'd by rage, or rival hate,
Prophets may wrongly scan the page of fate.
Tho' high the sons of men in wisdom shine,
Mortals can never fathom truths divine.
Could he who late the bulwark stood,
From the fell Sphynx our city to relieve,
Defile his spear with royal blood?
'Twere guilt to think, and madness to believe.

ACT III.

CREON, OEDIPUS, JOCASTA, CHORUS.

CREON.

THEBANS, I come to vindicate my fame
From the foul stains your king hath cast upon it.
In this dark moment, or by word or deed,
If Creon aught could aggravate your woes,
He were unworthy of the air he breathes;
For what is life, if I must live despised
By all my countrymen, and deemed a *traitor?*

Chor. 'Twas all the dictate of ungovern'd rage,
He could not think thee traitor—

Cre. Whence could spring
The base suspicion that, suborned by me,
The prophet utter'd lies?

Cho. Such were his words,
Hasty, unweighed, in an impassion'd hour—

Cre. Spoke he as if convinced?

Cho. 'Tis not my task
To penetrate the hidden thoughts of kings.
Ask him, behold he comes—

Oed. Thou regicide! *
Dar'st thou with all the hardiness of guilt
Approach my palace; thou whose treasonous schemes
Had plann'd my death, and would'st with rebel hand,
Have torn my sceptre from me? Tell me, traitor!
Didst thou esteem me fool or coward most,
Not to perceive thy arts, or not revenge
This violation of the rights of princes.
I tell thee, thou art fool and madman too,
Whose wild ambition hurries thee away
In quest of empire, which the people's voice
Alone can give, and pow'rful friends support.

Cre. When thou hast heard my firm reply—then judge
Whether I merit this severe reproach.

Oed. I know thy subtle powers of argument,
But all the force of words shall ne'er convince me
Thou art not still my most inveterate foe.

Cre. Yet hear me.

Oed. Talk not then of innocence

* The arrogant and tyrannical character of Oedipus is still further unfolded to us in this sudden and insolent attack, on the weak basis of suspicion merely, upon Creon, that Creon whose virtues he had in the last Act so highly applauded—that Creon, who, however, it must be owned, is represented in very different colours in the ANTIGONE of this author. This circumstance, added to his contemptuous treatment of the venerable priest of Apollo, and, consequently, of the oracle itself, still more and more prepares the mind for the dreadful catastrophe that awaits him.

Cre. Nay, if thou wilt not hear the voice of reason,
Thou grossly err'st.

Oed. And thou more grossly still,
If for this treatment of an injur'd friend
Thou hop'st to pass unpunished—

Cre. Prove the crime,
I will not murmur at the punishment.

Oed. Insidious traitor! didst thou not advise
To summon hither this omniscient prophet?

Cre. Mine was the counsel, and in like suspense
Should be repeated.

Oed. Speak, what length of time
Hath Laius—

Cre. What of Laius?

Oed. Thus been * slain
By hands unknown?

Cre. A long extent of years—

Oed. But tell me, did Tiresias then possess
This power of prophecy?

Cre. Alike he shone,
Renown'd in wisdom, and alike revered.

Oed. Aught did he then predict concerning me?

Cre. It never reach'd my ear.

* The word is ἔῤῥει, *flow'd away;* an expression most forcible in the original.

Oed. What! sought ye not
The author of the murd'rous deed?
Cre. All search
Prov'd fruitless.
Oed. Why did this impostor, then,
So high renown'd, disclose not this fell secret?
Cre. Silence doth best become the ignorant.
I can return no answer.
Oed. But of this,
At least, thou art the judge.
Cre. Of what? O speak—
Oed. Thou know'st then, if this prophet of deceit
Had not been wrought on by thy artful wiles,
He ne'er had dar'd accuse me of this crime.
Cre. If this the seer hath done, the task is thine
To vindicate thyself: but of *my* crimes
I still am ignorant.
Oed. *Thy* crimes? ask him.
But know—all, all thy arts shall never prove
Thy prince a murderer!
Cre. Hast thou not espous'd
My sister?
Oed. Yes, what then?
Cre. With pow'r supreme
Reign you not jointly o'er the sons of Thebes?
Oed. She shares at once my kingdom and my heart;
Her will is mine: but thou—

Cre. Do I not stand
The third in dignity?
Oed. Most undeservedly;
Thou hast betray'd thy friend.
Cre. Restrain awhile
The transport of thy rage, and be convinc'd—
Where is the man, who, blest with all that kings
And empires can bestow, without their cares,
Would barter for the pageant of a name,
That peace of mind which, empires with their wealth
Can never purchase, or when lost, restore?*
I am not mad enough to wish the change,
Nor hath a scepter such alluring charms
To draw me from that purpose, while I share
The highest power a subject can enjoy,
Or prince confer: monarchs are oft the slaves
Of factious nobles, oft resign their crowns
At the mad ravings of the tyrant vulgar—
I fear them not; suppliant they crouch to me,
All who to fortune, or to pow'r aspire,
And seek thy smile—Shall I this solid good

* This calm and dignified reply of Creon forms a striking contrast to the impetuous and vindictive *tirade* just uttered by Oedipus, who, from the excess of his resentful passion, is now sinking rapidly in the esteem of his audience; that audience whom his princely virtues had before so deeply interested in his behalf.

Quit for a shadow? No, thou wrong'st me, Prince:
I scorn the name of traitor, and would bare
The murderous plot to light, if aught I knew
Of lurking treason—Dost thou doubt my truth,
Go learn it of the Delphic oracles;
And, if I have deceiv'd thee, let me suffer
All the collective wrath of heav'n and thee.
Shall prejudice usurp the force of truth,
And shall a monarch, fam'd like Oedipus
For wisdom as for virtue, doom to shame,
On blind suspicion's most fallacious test,
His bosom friend? Remember, prince, the name
Of friend is sacred, and, to lose a friend,
A greater ill than loss of life itself—
My innocence revolving years will prove;
But wait with temper; for though curtain'd guilt
Is soon unveil'd, to heal the wounded fame
Of injur'd virtue asks an interval,
Far more extended in the march of Time.

Cho. Dread Sovereign, to his wise monitions bend
A willing ear; nor let thy rage transport thee
Beyond the bounds of reason: rash resolves
Are often dearly rued—

Oed. What! when the sword
Is lifted to my throat, must I submit,
With passive tameness, to the stroke that rends
My empire from me, and, with empire, life?

Cre. Rash, haughty man, what will appease thy rage?
My exile?

Oed. No, thy death.—

Cre. Must I then die
Without one proof of guilt?

Oed. Thy death, I say,
Alone can satisfy my just revenge.

Cre. Thou ravest!

Oed. I speak the purpose of my heart.

Cre. If so, 'tis prudent I consult my safety.

Oed. Thou traitor!

Cre. But thou hast not prov'd me such.

Oed. Appointed by the Gods, to reign on earth,
Their awful substitute! a king's commands
Must be obey'd.

Cre. If founded on injustice,
They ought to be resisted unto death—*

Oed. Thebes, hear'st thou this?

Cre. Yes, hears and triumphs too.
I am her son; she taught my infant soul
The glorious precept—

* The government of Thebes was strictly *monarchical*, and the speech of Oedipus is in unison with the despotic principles of such a government; the answer of Creon was rather calculated for the meridian of Athens, on whose theatre this fine drama was represented with an unbounded prodigality of expence.

Cho. Princes, cease your strife;
Jocasta hither from the palace bends:
Cease, or make her the umpire of your cause.
Joc. Whence rose this tumult? Thoughtless, cruel men,
Have you combin'd to multiply our griefs,
And plunge your country deeper in despair?
Let each in silence to his home depart,
Nor, with your private, swell the public woes.
Cre. Sister, thy lord hath basely injur'd me;
Nought but my ruin can appease his rage.
Oed. No, for this *brother* with insidious wiles
Hath plann'd my death—
Cre. May ev'ry curse of heav'n
Light on me, if I e'er indulg'd the thought.
Joc. His vows, O king, revere, and plighted faith;
If or thy country or thy queen be dear—
Cho. We too must join in the same ardent wish,
And plead his cause.
Oed. Must then a baffled prince
Submit to these reproaches from a subject?
Cho. His blameless character, his solemn oath,
At least demand respect.
Oed. What would you have,
Or know you?
Cho. We implore thee, prince—
Oed. Speak on

Cho. By friendship's holy name, to spurn not thus
One who so late was nearest to thy heart,
On mere suspicion.

Oed. Then you are resolv'd
To sacrifice me to his dark intrigues—
For he or I must fall.

Cho. By yon bright Sun,
The Leader of the flaming host of heav'n;
I meant not thus—'Tis agony of soul
For all the woes my bleeding country bears,
Makes me thus urgent.

Oed. Let him then be gone,
If I *must* be the victim. Not to his,
But thy request I yield—deep in this heart
Will ever dwell the mem'ry of his crimes.

Cre. Unskill'd to yield, thy stubborn soul is torn
With furied pangs—those pangs are my revenge.

Oed. Hence, villain, hence, lest I revoke my words.

Cre. I go, unmov'd by all thy menaces,
That cannot shake my innocence, and these
Can best defend it.— [*Exit Creon.*

Cho. Use thy power, O queen,
To soothe his mind, and urge him to retire.

Joc. But first inform me whence this contest rose

Cho. From vague reports, uncertain and unjust—
To both injurious.

Joc. What were these reports?

Cho. Press me no more, nor let us tear afresh
The wounds of Thebes.

Oed. This coldness in my cause
Becomes you not; you slight the Gods VICE-GERENT,
And yet profess to venerate those Gods.

Cho. Have I not sworn by Phœbus, that my zeal
And duty to my prince remain unshaken?
To love my country, and not love the man
Who snatch'd it from destruction, were to prove me
Bereft of reason: couldst thou stretch thine arm
Once more to save, how would her farthest bounds
Ring with thy triumph!

Joc. I conjure thee, Prince,
Tell me whence sprang this strange dissension.

Oed. Know,
Dearest Jocasta, that, with artful wiles,
Thy brother hath conspir'd to seize my throne.

Joc. Your throne, my lord? Whence could the thought arise?

Oed. 'Twas I, he said, that murder'd Laius—

Joc. Ha!
He could not speak the dictates of his heart.

Oed. Nay more, he hath suborn'd a crafty priest,
Who in the presence of near half my empire,
Urg'd home the charge—

Joc. Tho' all the race of priests

United to maintain the glaring lie,
Heed thou them not. No mortal eye can pierce
The dark decrees of fate: they all are bred
In ignorance, and traffic in deceit—
Thyself shall be the judge; this very prince,
Long since, received an oracle, the work
Of these same priests, (for by the God himself
'Twas never utter'd, as events have prov'd;)
With dreadful tidings that from our embrace
A son should spring, the murd'rer of his sire:
And now, we hear, that in some gloomy spot,
Where *three ways meet*, by robbers he was slain—
Yet chill'd with horror, ere the third dark morn
Rose on our babe, we pierc'd its infant feet,
And slaves convey'd it far away from Thebes,
To perish on the mountain's pathless heights.
Say then, could Phœbus utter this decree?
For neither did the son his father slay,
Nor Laius perish by the fate he fear'd.
Such is the boasted truth of oracles—
And let the sullen bigot hear and tremble.
Be thou convinc'd of this; that what the Gods
Would have us know, they can themselves reveal
Without the aid of these designing priests.

Oed. What sudden terrors seize me! O, my queen,
Thy words have fill'd my inmost soul with horror—

Joc. How? Wherefore?

Oed. Saidst thou not the prince was slain
Where *three ways meet?*
Joc. I did; 'twas thus affirm'd,
Nor is the fact disprov'd.
Oed. But say again,
Where, in what country did the murder happen?
Joc. In Phocis, where the public roads divide
To Delphi and to Daulia.
Oed. Mighty Gods!—
How long the period since this dire event?
Joc. Not long before thy reign o'er Thebes began,
The tidings were denounced.
Oed. Eternal Jove!
To what am I reserv'd!
Joc. Why is thy mind
Thus agitated?
Oed. Ask not, but inform me,
What were the age, form, stature, of this Laius?
Joc. In height majestic, years had scarcely ting'd
His locks with silver, and I've often thought
His form a faint resemblance of thy own.
Oed. Distraction!—On my own unconscious head
I have call'd down the curse of every God!
Joc. O heavens, I shudder as I gaze upon thee—
Oed. Too well, I fear, the prophet knew my fate!
One farther circumstance will prove my guilt,
Or seal my innocence—

Joc. Tho' my lips faulter,
Yet ask, and if I know, I will reveal it.
Oed. Went he attended with a chosen few,
Or with the pomp and splendor of a monarch?
Joc. His train consisted but of five; of these
One was the herald; and one only chariot
That carried Laius.
Oed. Then my guilt is fix'd—
Glaring as yonder sun—but who brought back
The tidings of his death?
Joc. One who alone
Escap'd the gen'ral slaughter.
Oed. Lives he now
Within this palace?
Joc. No; his lord no more,
When he beheld *thee* on the throne of Thebes,
With earnest supplication at my feet,
He sought permission to depart from Thebes,
To feed my distant flocks, nor I refus'd,
For he was ever the most faithful servant.
Oed. O haste, let him be summon'd instantly—
Joc. He shall; but why thus eagerly desire
This stranger's coming?
Oed. I am on the rack—
His answers may resolve my doubts, and oh!
May plunge me in despair; yet my resolve
Is fix'd to see him.

Joc. He will soon be here.
But oh! my lord, permit thy faithful queen
To search the bottom of this secret wound
That rankles at thy heart.

Oed. Thou shalt know all—
Since thy own fate is closely link'd with mine,
To thee I will unbosom all my soul.
My father Polybus, enjoys the throne
Of Corinth; Merope, his royal spouse,
By birth a Dorian—there I long possess'd
Riches and pow'r next only to supreme,
Till one event, most trivial in itself,
But dreadful in its issue, crush'd my joys—
A drunken courtier 'midst his cups proclaim'd
That Polybus was not my rightful sire.
Kindling at this, I scarce contain'd my rage
Till of my parents I enquir'd the truth
Of this base saying; they alike incens'd,
Threaten'd with death the author of the charge.
This calm'd my present fears, but still my mind
Labour'd with secret doubts—Resolv'd to search
This mystery of my birth, by private roads
I sought the Pythian shrine; the holy maid
Nought of my birth or parentage reveal'd;
But thus, convuls'd with raving extasies,
Read the dark page of fate—"Thou, wretch, art doom'd

" To stain thy mother's bed, from thence to raise
" A race accurst, and last with impious hand
" To slay the hoary sire who gave thee birth."
Shudd'ring with horror at these awful sounds,
With hasty step, from Corinth's fatal towers
I urg'd my way—Directed by the stars,
O'er trackless wastes and worse than Lybian wilds,
To that lone spot where murder'd Laius fell:
Ah, shake not thus, for I will tell thee all—
Just as I reach'd the pass, where *three ways meet,*
A chariot met my sight, where foremost sat,
Who seem'd a herald; but within reclin'd
Another, and appear'd of regal port,
In age, and form, and every circumstance
Resembling most the man thy words describe.
Both rush'd against me, and with fury strove
To drive me back—resentment fir'd my soul—
Instant I fell'd the charioteer to earth,
And sprang to meet the chariot, where the chief
Observant sate, and twice with all his might
Smote me upon the temples; but in death
Soon wail'd the rash assault—besmear'd with gore,
Beneath my staff he fell, and, at my feet,
With many a groan pour'd forth his forfeit life!
His servants in the general contest fell;
Not one, I thought, escap'd to tell the news.

If this *were* LAIUS—who, thro' earth's wide bound,
Is half so wretched as myself, or who
Like me accurst? No friendly citizen
Must succour my distress, or stranger ope
The hospitable door, but drive me hence,
Far hence, in desart solitudes to weep,
And seek, with howling savages, a home.
But oh! my bitterest pang—these lips pronounc'd
The dire decree that drives me from the land,
From Thebes, from thee, and all my soul holds dear,
A FOUL, INCESTUOUS, BLOODY PARRICIDE!!!
Ah whither shall I go; to Corinth? There
I seek incestuous transports—there I slay
The best of friends and fathers—Sure some fiend
Hurries me on thro' all this maze of guilt.
But O! ye mightier Powers, who rule on high,
Ere such a scene of horror overwhelm me,
Crush this devoted head, and let me find
In death a respite from severer toils.

Cho. O King, we more than share in all thy griefs;
Perhaps the shepherd may disperse your fears;
Despair not—

Oed. All my hopes are center'd *there*—

Joc. What is he to reveal?

Oed. If he confirm
The thing thou say'st, then am I free from guilt.

Joc. What have I said?

Oed. Thou said'st the king was slain
By robbers on his journey; if he fell
By numbers, I am safe—my single arm
The stranger slew; but if by one alone,
I am THAT WRETCH—

Joc. Doubt not his first report,
From which he dares not swerve—Not only I,
The whole assembled city heard the tale.
But if he swerve, it still remains to prove
That oracles themselves are not impostures;
For tho' their vaunted God had fix'd his death
On my poor murder'd child, that child thou seest
Perish'd long since on bleak CITHÆRON'S height—
Henceforth my soul is steel'd against belief
Of priests and prophecies.*

* In this place we find another instance of the consummate skill exerted by Sophocles in the conduct of this tragedy, as well as direct proof of the sublime precepts, both sacred and moral, inculcated by the ancients in their dramatic compositions. The very argument which Jocasta makes use of, both here and in a preceding passage, for treating with contempt and neglect the oracles of the Gods, viz. the *supposed* failure of the prediction in regard to the fate of Laius, recoils with tenfold force upon herself; and, owing to that prediction being strictly verified, eventually affords the strongest possible ground for inculcating a profound and unfailing veneration and obedience to the decrees of heaven. She is equally unfortunate in her efforts to dissipate the fears of Oedipus, and all the arguments used to remove them, tend most forcibly to corroborate his well-grounded

Oed. Nor without cause,
If thy report on truth's firm basis rest—
But oh! with speed dispatch some trusty slave
To bring this shepherd.

Joc. Thou shalt be obey'd
This instant; let us go within the palace.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Eternal Jove! my heart inspire
With pure devotion's fervent zeal, to hear
Thy voice obedient, and thy laws revere;
Those heav'n-descended laws, almighty Sire!
Which thy creative energy imprest
On animated nature's infant breast.

apprehensions. Struck with horror at the profaneness of her sentiments, and to prevent any ill impression from being made on the audience, from the example of so elevated a character, the Chorus commences the succeeding stanzas in a strain of genuine and animated piety, recommending a due submission and resignation to those decrees, and deprecating the anger of the Gods on account of the glaring impiety of the queen. From the religious and moral sentiments diffused through it, as well as its high *poetic* merit, this Chorus may justly be numbered among the sublimest effusions of the kind in Sophocles.

Daughters of light, unlike the race of earth,
Who range the tracts of day with * steps sublime;
Still vigorous like the god who gave them birth,
Beyond the grasp of fate, or bound of time!

ANTISTROPHE I.

'Twas insolence first drench'd in blood
The tyrant's hand; but when elate with pride
He spurns at right, and dares the Gods deride,
From the proud precipice where late he stood,
That insolence shall dash him headlong down,
To wail his cruelty and ravish'd crown—
To thee, dread ruler of events below,
In deep humility behold we bend,
Wisdom and life from thee their fountain flow;
Oh! from yon heav'ns thy instant succour send.

STROPHE II.

Where do the destin'd sons of rapine rove,
Who slight the awful voice of nature's God,
Nor bend with rev'rence at his high abode—
The thunder, struggling in the grasp of Jove,
With strong vibration labours to be gone,
And sweep them to the gulph of Acheron—

* Ὑψίποδές γ' ὠρανιαν δι' αἰθέρα τεκνωθέντες—

If vice triumphant rear her purple crest,
And injur'd virtue lift her voice in vain,
Still shall the tyrant fiend usurp the breast,
And vainly do we raise this choral strain.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Flaming with holy zeal no more
To Delphi shall the priests of Jove repair,
Or where Olympia's turrets rise in air,
With gifts and songs the gods implore;
If impious tongues those rights profane,
And treat their mandates with disdain—
Lord of the universe! their pride controul,
Avenge thine own; assert Apollo's cause;
And flash conviction on the stubborn soul
That spurns thy precepts, and resists thy laws.

ACT IV.

MESSENGER, CHORUS, JOCASTA, OEDIPUS, SHEPHERD.

JOCASTA.

SAGES and chiefs of Thebes, 'tis my resolve,*
With incense, and with suppliant boughs, to seek
The temple of the Gods—your Prince, so high
For wisdom fam'd, and fortitude of soul,
Forgets that he is man. His mind is torn
With dismal terrors of he knows not what,
And shrinks at each unmeaning tale he hears:

* This sudden change in the conduct of Jocasta, from gross impiety to penitential devotion; from avowed contempt of oracles to that implicit belief in their truth, which hurries her a humble supplicant to the altars of the Gods, is very remarkable; and arises not less from the dreadful despondency in which she sees her unfortunate husband plunged, than the secret anguish and remorse to which reflection has given birth. Amidst her anxious endeavours to revive his sinking spirits, her own mind, on a retrospective survey of events, is not without its awful forebodings, and these drive her to the Temple; but she quickly relapses into infidelity when the messenger from Corinth, in the next scene, announces the natural death of Polybus, his supposed father: with how little reason, however, is too soon apparent!

I urge, entreat, expostulate in vain—
Heav'n is provok'd, I fear; on thee we call,
All-seeing Phœbus, nearest still to hear
The wretch's plaint, arm thou his wav'ring thought
With wonted firmness—He whose skilful hand
Should guide our bark, the pilot of the state,
Sinks at the helm, and the tumultuous sea
Will soon ingulph us all.

Messen. Inform me, strangers,
Where I shall find the palace of your king,
Or soonest where himself?—

Cho. This is his palace:
The king is now within; thou seest his queen.

Mess. Is that indeed the wife of Oedipus?
Health and felicity attend the queen—
On all who dwell beneath these royal roofs
May guardian Heav'n its choicest blessings shed—

Joc. I thank thee, stranger, for thy friendly greeting;
But quickly tell me wherefore art thou come,
And what thy tidings?

Mess. Welcome, mighty princess,
To thee and Oedipus—

Joc. What are they, say;
And whence thyself?

Mess. From Corinth, and I bring
News that will cause you both delight and grief.

Joc. Instant explain thy meaning—

Mess. If report
Lie not, the race of Isthmus have resolv'd
That Oedipus shall reign supreme in Corinth.

Joc. What—is not Polybus their king?

Mess. He was—
But death hath laid the hoary king in dust.

Joc. How! Polybus no more?

Mess. May worse than death
Befall thy slave, if his report prove false—

Joc. Haste to thy master with the joyful news.
Fly instant;—where, ye lying oracles!
Diviners, where is now your boasted truth,
Prophets and Priests? For Oedipus long since,
Fearing lest he should shed this monarch's blood,
As Phœbus had foretold, from Corinth fled
In willing exile. Now forsooth we hear
That by the common course of fate he died,
Without or fraud, or violence.

Oed. O! my queen,
Why am I summon'd from my palace hither?

Joc. For this; to learn the truth of oracles:
That stranger there will best explain my words.

Oed. Who is he? Whence, and what his message, say.

Joc. He comes from Corinth, and the tidings bears,
That Polybus, your father, is no more.

Oed. Is this thy message? is it thus indeed?

Mess. Ev'n as the queen hath said—

Oed. But speak again:
How died the Prince; by treason or disease?

Mess. Ah, Prince, a little violence will bow
The languid limbs of age.

Oed. Disease then crush'd
The good old monarch—

Mess. Yes, disease in part,
And part the pressure of a length of years,
For he had measur'd out the life of man.*

Oed. 'Tis well—what blinded wretch will now regard
Altars, and priests, and birds of ominous wing,
Screaming aloft? whose false and base decrees
Had plung'd my hand in blood, a father's blood,
Who died, it seems, remote from Thebes and me,
Bow'd down with weight of years: these hands unstain'd,
And guiltless of his blood—Unless, perchance,
Corroding anguish for the loss of me
Prey'd on his heart, and hurried on his fate.

* Μακρῷ γε συμμετρούμενος χρόνῳ.

The same expression occurs in the Psalms;

"Make me to know the measure of my days." 39th Psalm, 4th verse.

Thus only could I cause his death: but he
Sleeps in the bosom of the grave; nor priests,
Nor oracles shall break his long repose.

Joc. Did I not tell thee this?

Oed. Thou didst; but still
Severest apprehensions shook my soul.

Joc. Away with them for ever—

Oed. But the *bed*
Of incest—how it harrows up my thoughts!

Joc. Let not vain terrors agitate thy mind;
Man is the sport of chance; the pow'rs divine,
Lost in the nobler pleasures of the skies,
Heed not our reptile race—The task be his
To husband well his life, and rove at large
Where fancy leads, or pleasure points the way.
Fear not th' *incestuous bed*, nor be the slave
Of frantic zeal or superstitious dreams:
For oft, amidst the slumbers of the night,
Have men in visions reap'd incestuous joys—
True happiness is his, who boldly spurns
Such vain chimæras.

Oed. True; but still she lives,
This *mother*, whom I dread, and I must fly
Th' accurst embrace—

Joc. Go to thy father's grave;
Let that inform thee what thou hast to fear.

Oed. Yet, yet I shudder; and, while she survives,
I still must tremble.

Mess. Say, illustrious prince,
What is this woman whom thou fear'st so much?

Oed. 'Tis Merope, my friend, the late espous'd
Of Polybus—

Mess. But whence proceed your fears?

Oed. From oracles most dreadful to relate!

Mess. And may a stranger know them?

Oed. Thou shalt hear:
Apollo hath denounc'd, that I should stain
A *mother's* bed with incest, and these hands
Drench in *paternal blood*—For this, long since,
I fled from Corinth, and have here enjoy'd
Each earthly bliss, save that most sweet of all,
The dear delight a parent's presence gives.

Mess. Was this the motive of thy exile?

Oed. This,
This dread alone of parricidal guilt—

Mess. What if I prove the messenger of joy,
And bring thee tidings such as may disperse
Thy every doubt?

Oed. Ah, dearest stranger, speak them;
Thy recompense shall be most princely.

Mess. Yes—
I come to chase thy fears, relieve thy doubts,
And hail thee back to Corinth—

Oed. Never, never!
While one of those dear parents still survives,
Will I return to Corinth!

Mess. Prince, I see
Thy ignorance hath caused these idle fears.

Oed. Indeed! By heav'n inform me where I err.

Mess. If for this cause thou fled'st—

Oed. The curse denounc'd
By Phœbus, drove me into willing exile.

Mess. The dread of murder, and incestuous crimes—

Oed. The same.

Mess. Thy fears are groundless—

Oed. Not if these
My parents were, or true the voice of Jove.

Mess. Know then that Polybus by ties of blood
To thee was never bound.

Oed. How? Speak again:
Not Polybus my sire!

Mess. No more than mine—*

Oed. And yet he call'd me *son*!

* The περιπετης, or change of fortune to the reverse of what was expected, so artfully introduced here by Sophocles, has been the admiration of all the critics from the days of Aristotle, who dilates upon it, to the present. Thinking to annihilate all his fears at once, by assuring him that he had nothing to apprehend on the ground of his Corinthian connections —nothing on the score of Polybus, or Merope, in respect to imagined

Mess. His by adoption—
These hands first gave thee to his fond embrace.
Oed. And could an alien kindle in his soul
A father's transports?
Mess. He had never known
A father's joys.
Oed. Was I by purchase thine,
Or may I hail thee by a father's name?
Mess. I found thee in a deep and darksome glen
Of Mount CITHÆRON—
Oed. Ha! what led thee there?
Mess. My flocks, that ranged the mountain's verdant sides.
Oed. Thou wert a shepherd then, it seems?—
Mess. I was;
And more, the shepherd that preserv'd thy life—
Oed. What had befall'n me, ere thy guardian hand
Snatch'd me from death?

murder or incest—the Shepherd unconsciously unfolds the dreadful secret, and plunges him into a fathomless abyss of misery, demonstrating to the unhappy monarch that he is the identical *parricide*, and the *incestuous person* alluded to by the oracle! The rapidity with which the dialogue flows in this place—the short and broken sentences of the speakers—excite particular interest, and mark the hand of a MASTER. How deeply is it to be lamented that of above *one hundred* tragedies said to have been written by Sophocles, only *seven* should have reached posterity entire! (Vide Fabricii Biblioth. Græc. vol. i. p. 595.)

Mess. The joints of thy own feet
Will best inform thee what—

Oed. Ah, why repeat
That ancient malady?

Mess. Mine was the hand
That loosed their tendons from the intangling cords.

Oed. Thus early did my woes commence?

Mess. To this
Thou owest the name of OEDIPUS.—*

Oed. Ah me!—
Which of my parents could be thus inhuman;
Canst thou inform me?

Mess. That he best can tell
Who gave thee to me.

Oed. Then thou found'st me not;
But from another didst receive me?

Mess. Yes,
A brother shepherd gave thee to my charge.

Oed. O speak his name, his residence, whate'er
Thou know'st of this same shepherd.

Mess. He was call'd
A servant of king Laius.—

* The name of Oedipus was given him διὰ τὸ οἰδεῖν τους ποδας: on account of *the tumour and perforation of his feet*. The direct allusion to this personal calamity suffers not a shadow of a doubt of his guilt to remain in the mind of Oedipus. The total silence of Jocasta on this occasion is very remarkable; she appears stupified at the intelligence.

Oed. Laius? ha!
The same who govern'd Thebes?
Mess. The very same—
He was his shepherd.
Oed. Is he still alive;
Could I behold him?
Mess. These his countrymen
Can better tell thee.
Oed. O my friends, declare
If aught ye know, or aught, perchance, have heard
Of such a shepherd; whether he resides
At Thebes, or in the country—instant speak—
'Tis of the last importance to our welfare.
Cho. O king, if right we judge, he seems the man
Whom thou hast lately summon'd: but the queen
Is best acquainted.
Oed. Princess, dost thou know
Whether the man this shepherd hath describ'd,
And he, whom thou hast sent for, be the same?
Joc. I know not what he said, or whom he meant—*

* Jocasta, who had all this time been listening, with profound attention, to the replies of the Messenger during this most interesting discourse, having learned enough to convince her that Oedipus was the *actual criminal* alluded to by the oracle, affects here an ignorance and an indifference ill suited to the agonizing feelings to which that discourse had given rise. Most urgent is she to dissuade the unhappy prince from enquiring farther

Nor is there aught of moment in his words;
Dark, idle words; thou art too anxious, prince:
Act not thus rashly.

Oed. What? Must I neglect
To trace this mystery of my birth, when now
The path is open, and the prospect fair?

Joc. By heav'n forbear; I tell thee 'tis a rock
Thy peace will split on—if thou valuest life
Or happiness, forbear—O this torn heart—

Oed. Hence, woman, with thy fears; I am resolv'd—
Were all my ancestors a race of slaves,
'Twere no disgrace to thee—I sav'd your empire—
In that one deed was more nobility,
Than all the glories of your line can boast.

Joc. By all thy soul holds dear, beware the search—

Oed. Not all thy eloquence can shake my purpose
To trace this matter to the very source.

Joc. Oh hear my better counsel, and forbear:
Shun it as death—

Oed. Thy counsel but involves me
In tenfold error.

into the dreadful mystery of his birth; but being utterly unable to do so, finding all irretrievably lost, in a fit of despair and horror, she rushes from his presence with a determined resolution to effect the dreadful purpose unfolded to us in the subsequent Act. The punishment of impiety, following so immediately upon the reiteration of the crime, has the full moral effect upon the audience intended by the author.

Joc. Wretched, wretched prince!
May heav'n still hide the secret from thy view,
Nor curse thee with the knowledge of thy birth—
Oed. Let other messengers be sent, in haste,
To bring this lingering shepherd to our presence:
And leave the queen to glory in her birth,
And ancient lineage.
Joc. Wretched, wretched prince—
Obstinate, headlong, to thy own destruction,
I leave thee to a search which thou shalt rue
For ever—treasure in thy heart those words;
Remember they're my last—my last! farewell—
[*Exit hastily Jocasta.*
Cho. Sire, didst thou mark Jocasta's fix'd despair!
With what confused and eager looks she fled;
Much, much I fear her silence does presage
Events of dreadful issue!
Oed. Let them come:
Still my resolve is fix'd to penetrate
This mighty cloud that hangs around my birth—
Whate'er my fate, I must not, will not more
Be kept in darkness: this it is that stings
Her haughty soul: she thinks that I shall prove
Of rank, and parents, humbler than her own—
Blind woman! but my parents *were not mean.*
Thou wert my mother, FORTUNE; and thy son

Glories in his descent—sublimer far
Than all the kings of earth—the kindred months,
Offspring of time, coeval with the world,
Salute me as they roll their mighty round,
And call me BROTHER—Led thro' arduous toils,
By you I triumph on the throne of Thebes,
Power in my nod, and fortune in my smile:
And from the glorious height look down secure,
Whoe'er my sire, a monarch or a slave.

STROPHE.

A prophet's spirit warms my soul!
I see, I see the radiant visions dawn;
And all the scenes of fate unroll!
By great Olympus, ere another morn,
CITHÆRON, skirt thy dusky front with gold,
Thou shalt the long, mysterious maze unfold.
Then to our king shall swell the choral song,
Our feet in mystic dance more swiftly move;
And while our grateful measures we prolong,
Applauding Phœbus shall the strain approve.

ANTISTROPHE.

What bright celestial gave thee birth?
O thou, whose wisdom speaks that birth divine:
Renown'd above the sons of earth;
From Jove descended, or the sister Nine!

Say art thou sprung from sylvan Pan's embrace,
With some fair daughter of ætherial race;
Or wert thou nourish'd in Cyllene's groves,
Where Mercury the swifter nymphs pursues;
Or on the sacred hills where Bacchus roves,
And courts in laurel bow'rs the bashful muse?

Oed. Friends, if my judgment err not, yonder sage,
This way advancing, is the same whom late
We summon'd hither; both in age, and mien,
Resembling whom this stranger hath describ'd.
My servants too support him: you, perchance,
May better know him.

Cho. 'Tis the same, my lord,
The faithful shepherd of our good old king—

Oed. Stranger, is this the man?

Mess. I know him well—

Oed. Old man, draw near; look up with confidence,
And answer faithfully what I shall ask—
Didst thou not live with Laius?

Shep. Yes, my lord;
Nor was I of the hireling train, but bred
Within this palace—

Oed. What thy office? speak.

Shep. My office was to tend the royal sheep—

Oed. In what fair region of this mighty empire?

Shep. On Mount CITHÆRON, and the neigbouring plains.
Oed. Say, dost thou recollect that *stranger*'s face?
Shep. That *stranger*—who? Whence is he? What his crime?
Oed. I say again, reflect—and call to mind
If thou hast ever had, or intercourse,
Or converse with him—
Shep. Sire, with age, and cares,
My memory fails—
Mess. Nor is there cause of wonder:
But I'll refresh his memory, and recount
Some ancient facts he soon will call to mind.
I am that shepherd who full many a moon
Thro' long successive years, thy friendship shar'd
On bleak CITHÆRON's height—early as spring
Bade the young herbage shoot; ev'n till the rise
Of pale Arcturus—and when winter's frosts
Deform'd the year, each with his sev'ral flocks
Departed homeward; to my cottage I,
And thou to Laius' palace: have these scenes
Entirely fled thy thoughts?
Shep. Almost they had;
For 'tis a long, long period since—
Mess. 'Tis true:
But can'st thou, shepherd, to remembrance call
An *infant* whom I once receiv'd from thee,
And promis'd all a father's fostering care?

Shep. An *infant*, friend? What means thy question?

Mess. This,

This is that infant whom thou now behold'st—

Shep. Away with thee, thou rav'st—perdition seize

Thy traitor's tongue—

Oed. Why art thou thus incens'd?

Thou art thyself more worthy of reproof.

Shep. In what have I offended?

Oed. By thy rage,

And silence touching this same child.

Shep. Ah, Sir,

He knew not what he said—

Oed. Ease my suspense,

Or by the Gods I'll force the secret from thee—

Shep. Ah, ven'rate hoary age!

Oed. Quick, bind his hands—

Shep. What must I do, my lord, or what disclose?

Oed. Delay not, but inform me, didst thou give

An infant to this man?—

Shep. I *did*, and oh!

Death had that moment been my happiest boon—

Oed. This day thou diest, unless I know the whole

Of this dark scene.

Shep. Ah, spare the dire recital:

'Tis death to tell thee—

Oed. Dost thou trifle with me?

Shep. Did I not say I gave the child?

Oed. Go on—

Whence came he? Was he thine by birth, or who
Consign'd him to thy charge?

Shep. He was not mine;

Another's hand consign'd him to my care—

Oed. What other? Speak his name, and where he dwells—

Shep. By all the pow'rs above, enquire no more:
I do conjure thee—

Oed. If I ask again,

Wretch, thou shalt die—

Shep. In yonder palace born—

Oed. Sprung from a slave, or was the king his sire?

Shep. Oh misery to declare—

Oed. Oh! Death to hear!

Yet speak—

Shep. He was suppos'd the *king's own son*—
But well Jocasta knows the gloomy truth;
She can instruct thee best—

Oed. Didst thou from her

Receive the child?

Shep. 'Twere fruitless to deny

What fate itself reveals.

Oed. What was her purpose?

Shep. That I should kill it—

Oed. What, destroy the child?

Bloody, inhuman parent!—

Shep. Dire affright,
From dreadful oracles, compell'd the queen
To this unnatural deed.
Oed. How, oracles?
What did they threaten?
Shep. That this son should slay
Those who begat him—
Oed. But if such her fears,
Why didst thou give it to this shepherd's care?
Shep. Compassion for the infant wrung my soul;
I hop'd he would have borne his charge away,
Far, far from Thebes, and these his native roofs—
Fatal mistake! that *life* to him was *death,*
Preserv'd to long, unutterable woes—
For oh! *if thou be'st he,* thou art indeed
The most ill-fated, most accurst of men—
Oed. 'Tis done; the tenfold mystery bursts to light;
I AM THAT MOST ILL-FATED, MOST ACCURST—
Thou sun, farewell; why smile thy beams on me,
Whom murder blackens, and whom incest stains?—
Incest and murder of the deepest hue:
A father slain, a mother's bed defil'd!—
Come night, come horror, shield me from his rays;
Plunge me in thick impenetrable glooms,
Black as my crimes, and boundless as my guilt.—

CHORUS.

O MAN, thou shadow of a shade!
How soon thy brightest glories fade!
What higher boon could fortune give,
What nobler rapture man receive,
Than late she shower'd on our devoted king;
Only to plunge him deeper in despair,
And ratify the solemn truths we sing?
At yon sad spectacle of woe,
Who can refrain the starting tear!
What tongue the bitter plaint forbear,
"That mis'ry is the lot of all below!"
Blind fav'rite of a nymph more blind!
She bade thee dart thy rapid flight
Beyond the bound to mortal pride assign'd;
And placed thee on her dizziest height—
Then thine arm the monster slew,
Dreadful with her forked fang,
Whose eagle pinions mock'd the wind,
While ravening, as in quest of blood she flew,
To Thebes the prophecies of death she sang—
For this, thy hand the scepter shar'd,
An empire thy sublime reward—

But now what sounds of horror meet mine ear?
How art thou blasted in thy bright career!
How chang'd in one dark, fatal hour,
Dash'd from the soaring pinnacle of pow'r,
And all that mortals vaunt of high and great,
To wrestle with the toils of fate—
Thrice wretched prince, renown'd in vain!
Since all the trophies of thy fame
Throw but a guilty splendour round thy woes—
Unchill'd with horror, who those crimes shall name
Whose dark, indelible, eternal stain,
With infamy pollutes thy bed,
And dooms to vengeance thy devoted head.
How could thy conscious bed so long sustain
Its guilty load, thro' night's incumbent gloom,
Nor start with horror, and a voice assume!
But fate hath bared the impious deed to light,
Hath bar'd to our astonish'd sight
A father murder'd by his child,
A mother by that son's embrace defil'd.
O that these eyes might ne'er behold thee more,
But distant far their duteous sorrows pour:
By thee we rais'd them up to life and light,
Only to plunge them in eternal night!

ACT V.

CHORUS, MESSENGER, OEDIPUS, CREON.

ENTER IN HASTE ANOTHER MESSENGER.

MESSENGER.

Most honour'd chiefs of this once happy land,
Rouse all the resolution man can boast
To fortify your souls, while I relate
A direr tale than ever reach'd your ears—
Unfold a scene to your astonish'd eyes
More black with woe than e'er those eyes beheld—
Not the broad Danube's waves, nor Phasis' stream,
Can purge away the complicated crimes
That stain these guilty roofs—in dark array
They rise to view, and, as they rise, pollute
The sickening light—fate rules the gloomy hour,
And rash despair, impatient, rushes on
To deeds of added horror—

Cho. Added horror!

We thought the catalogue of this day's woes
Already swell'd beyond the pow'r of fate.
Mess. No—to complete our sufferings, she reserves
A stroke more dreadful still—the queen is slain!
Cho. Jocasta slain—by whom? What daring hand—
Mess. She dar'd herself the deed: no conscious eye
Was witness to her death. What we beheld
These faultering lips shall tell.—With hasty step,
Enrag'd, she burst within the palace gates—
Then, rushing to the bridal chamber, tore,
With savage fury, her disorder'd hair;
Invoking Laius from the tomb to view
A wretch—the fatal source of all his woes—
Who bore his murderer—clasp'd the parricide—
That son, that murd'rer, in abhorr'd embrace—
And stain'd his bed with incest—then with shrieks
Of wildest grief, she wail'd th' accursed couch
That witness'd to her dark, forbidden joys—
Nor heard we more; for instant we beheld
The wretched Oedipus, in frantic mood,
Raving thro' all the dome—with thund'ring voice
Commanding us to bring him sword or spear,
To end his hated being—"Lead me where
These eyes, ere veil'd in darkness, may behold
That injur'd form I dare not call my WIFE—
Her who begat me, her, whose glowing limbs,

Unconscious, clasp'd the husband in the child."—
Instant, by some inspiring dæmon led,
He rush'd upon the double doors that clos'd
The unhappy queen, and from their brazen bolts
Tore them—while far and wide the hollow dome
Resounded back his cries: but soon new scenes
Of horror met our sight, the royal fair
All pale and breathless, in the fatal noose
Entangled—Shuddering at the view, the prince
Recoil'd: then loosing the suspended cord,
Heav'd a deep groan, and flung him on the ground,
Convuls'd awhile with agonies of grief—
When sudden starting, from her robe he tore
The golden buckle that adorn'd her side,
And madly plung'd the points into his eyes—
Exclaiming, "Never more shall I behold
Or thee, unhappy woman, or the race
Sprung from thy loins."—Bellowing these horrid plaints,
He pierc'd, and from their mangled sockets tore,
The balls of sight: instant the gushing blood
Its sluices burst, and, rushing down his cheeks,
Pour'd the black flood that stain'd his princely form.
Such are the complicated ills that crush'd
This wretched pair—Who lately reign'd supreme
In mutual bliss, are now supreme alone
In misery: curst with more than common woes!—

Ah! how hath one black fatal morn o'ercast
The cloudless scene! how blasted all their joys!
On ev'ry side are heard the mingled sounds
Of groans, despair and death—th' appalling cries
Of MURDER, BLOOD, and INCEST—all the stores
Of secret anguish, and severe distress,
At once discharging their collective rage.

Cho. Where is the hapless prince?

Mess. Throw wide, he cries,
Throw wide the gates—and let all Thebes behold
The murderer of his sire, with incest black,
With blood defil'd, and crimes without a name—
Lead me, O lead me from these guilty roofs,
To banishment, to death—that banishment
My lips denounc'd will be my best relief
From all th' insufferable ills that rush,
With overwhelming rage, at once upon me—
But words are weak: behold a scene that speaks
Beyond the boldest pow'rs of eloquence;
A scene so full of horror, it would move
His most inveterate foe.

Cho. Ah! sight of grief
Beyond whate'er my darkest fears had fram'd.
Rash man! what furious dæmon urg'd thee on
To this dire act; thus to accumulate
Woe upon woe to crush thy hapless head?

Most wretched of the wretched! my swoll'n heart
Had much to utter; but must burst itself
In silence, for the sight of such distress
Hath struck me dumb for ever—

ENTER OEDIPUS.

Oed. Hah! where am I?
What plaintive accents vibrate on my ear,
That seem to pity one whom fate hath plac'd
Beyond the pow'r of pity to relieve!—
FORTUNE, my mother, whither art thou fled?

Cho. She hath forsaken thee; hath plung'd thee down
In an abyss of woes.

Oed. O dark! dark! dark!
Dark without dawn of hope, or beam of day!
I stand envelop'd in eternal shade:
Remembrance like a fury stings my soul,
While headlong passion sharpens ev'ry goad,
And drives me on to madness—

Cho. Doubly curst
Both in a husband's and a father's hopes,
Well may thy reason fail thee in this hour
Of multifold affliction.

Oed. Art thou here!
Thou, once my friend and guide in happier hours—

THIS, THIS WAS OEDIPUS.—Abject and blind,
Thou wilt not leave me to severer pangs.
Cho. What hast thou done? What vengeful god impell'd
To this mad deed?
Oed. Phœbus himself,—yes, Phœbus,
Is that avenging, that impulsive pow'r—
That I am blind, impute to me alone,
'Twas I who quench'd those orbs, whose light but serv'd
To kindle horror, and awake despair.—
Cho. Ah! dreadful truth!
Oed. What, what remains
Grateful to me, in voice, or sight, or sound?
Each joy extinct, and earth one barren void.
Rouse you, my friends, in injur'd virtue's cause;
Drive from your land this pestilential bane,
This monster, *black with incest and with blood;*
This most abhorr'd of gods, and all mankind.
Cho. Thy suff'rings make thee rave—Ah! fatal hour
When first I hail'd thee on the throne of Thebes!
Oed. And oh! more fatal hour that saw my feet
Loos'd from their bands on bleak Cithæron's height—
Curst be the hand that loos'd them—'Twas not life
That hand bestow'd; 'twas death—I then had died
In innocence, nor known, nor caus'd a pang!
Cho. Oh thus had fate ordain'd—
Oed. I had not *then*

Imbrued my hand in blood—I had not *then*
Receiv'd Jocasta to my guilty bed—
I should not *then*—

Cho. How! What shall I advise thee,
Since death itself were better far than life
Wasted in mis'ry and perpetual gloom?

Oed. The loss of sight, my friends, I least bewail—
Ah! with what * eyes in Pluto's dark domain,
Could Oedipus have view'd his murder'd sire,
Cover'd with wounds, and welt'ring in the blood
His impious offspring spilt—or her who bore
The parricidal wretch, whose foul embrace
Hath stain'd the conscious womb that gave him life?
Could e'er this heart a parent's joy have known,
To view the offspring of that foul embrace,
Tho' fair in virgin beauty, hast'ning on
Thro' long progressive misery, to complete
The measure of my woes, and share my guilt!
Ah! never, never could these eyes behold them;

* It appears from this passage, that the ancients supposed the same qualities both of mind and body to be possessed by the dead which they had while living.

Thus Virgil,

——— Laniatum corpore toto
Deiphobum videt, et lacerum crudeliter ora.
Æneid, lib. 6, 495.

Never the lofty citadels of Thebes,
Her gilded palaces, her glittering fanes,
And her bold race that own'd me king in vain,
Since now debas'd below the meanest slave—
Oh painful, bitter change! These lips pronounc'd
The curst decree that drives me from the land;
The execrated scorn of you and heav'n,
A foul, incestuous, bloody parricide.—
Thus with a thousand objects compass'd round,
To wound anew my agónizing heart,
Blindness is but relief from weightier ills—
Grant me, ye mighty rulers of the world,
Some pow'r to bar the passages of sound,
To shut each sense, and quite extinguish thought;
For ev'ry sense is but alive to woe—
Ah why, Cithæron! did thy high-arch'd glooms
Lend their broad shade to screen my infant head?
Why did not some devouring savagè rend
My scatter'd limbs, and give them to the winds;
That my disgraceful birth might never stain
The annals of mankind?—O Polybus!
And thou, O Corinth—falsely deem'd my country—
How have ye nourish'd in these princely robes,
Beneath this specious form, a canker'd wound,
Putrid and rank! for now I stand confess'd
Base in myself, and base in my descent—

Ye conscious forests—ye wide-spreading glades—
And thou dark avenue—*where three ways meet*—
That drank the blood of my expiring sire;
Witness what guilty transports fired my breast
When I beheld his hoary figure fall
Prostrate and bite the ground—how am I chang'd!
How dearly have I rued the triumph—bought
At the high price of ev'ry other joy!
Hurl'd headlong from the bliss of gods, to wail
With dæmons in the hell of deep despair!
O FATAL, FATAL NUPTIALS!—NIGHT OF HORROR!
How have ye stamp'd pollution on the names
Of father, brother, son—how burst the bands
Of dear relation!—Sure around the bed
Some fierce presiding dæmon fix'd his stand,
And sow'd the seeds of ev'ry baneful ill.
Reflection shudders at the black detail—
I cannot bear the retrospect: my tongue
Cleaves to my mouth, and ev'ry sinew shrinks—
Wherefore, by all the gods, approach, and slay
This victim to my own and others crimes—
Or bear me to some bleak and barren isle,
Where sound of human voice was never heard;
Or plunge me in the deep with all my crimes—
Fear not, my friends—approach; black as I am,
Ye cannot, by the touch, partake the guilt,
Whose weight shall crush this guilty head alone.

Cho. Most opportunely Creon this way bends;
Creon, on whom thy pow'r and kingly sway
Will soon devolve, as next of royal line:
His counsel best will guide us thro' this maze
Of intricate suspense—

Oed. What say'st thou—Creon?
That Creon, whom I late so basely injur'd—
What can I say to him; or how find words
At once expressive of my shame and grief!

Cre. Think not I come to triumph o'er the fall'n,
Most wretched prince, or aggravate thy woes
By insolent reproach—gladly I bring
Whate'er is mine of counsel or support.
But ye, my Thebans, if ye shudder not
At those impurities the very sight
Of * such deep guilt imparts, at least revere

* This speech of Creon has been censured as cruel and contradictory. Creon, however, through the whole of this play, (however differently drawn, as before hinted, in the ANTIGONE) appears a respectable character: he interests himself much in discovering the true sense of the oracle, and in contriving such measures as may best alleviate the miseries of the city. His unwillingness, therefore, to offend the Gods by exposing the detected person, and his determination to do nothing without consulting the oracle, expressed in his next speech, which has likewise been objected to on the same account, are only additional proofs of that ready attention to the divine will, which he manifests in every part of this performance, and which may well be further excited by the alarming examples now before him of the miseries that had arisen from a contrary conduct in others.

The bright and active ray of yonder sun,
Whose sickening beam abhorrent turns aside
From that loath'd object, whom the public curse
Hath doom'd to infamy—forbade t' approach
Our shrines, our altars, and the lustral dew
Thrown from the pontiff's consecrating hand—
O quickly lead him to the inmost gloom
Of yonder palace, for, in crimes like his,
There dwells a horror of such dreadful kind,
As should be sacred from the vulgar eye,
And only view'd by those in blood allied.

Oed. Ah! Creon, dearest, yet much injur'd friend,
In me thou seest a melancholy proof
How vain are wisdom's most exalted boasts!
How slippery are the heights of human pride!
Thee late I treated with reproach and scorn;
'Tis now thy turn to triumph—but thy soul,
Too great and gen'rous, scorns th' unmanly thought—
I crave but one poor boon—O grant me this,
And thou'rt indeed my friend—

Cre. Name it; 'tis granted—

Oed. This instant banish me from thee and Thebes,
To some drear spot, where I may waste my last
Sad days in solitude, and wail my crimes.

Cre. Thy exile is decreed: but we must first
Consult the Gods—

Oed. The Gods have been consulted;
The firm, irrevocable voice of fate
Hath spoken, that the *parricide shall die*—
Cre. Yet it beseems us further to enquire
Their will concerning thee.
Oed. Concerning me!
Thus foul, thus impious, wouldst thou weary heav'n
With more enquiries?
Cre. Warn'd by thy disasters,
We learn to venerate the powers divine!
Oed. But one word more, and I have done for ever—
By every bond of friendship I conjure thee,
By all the ties of nature, to decree
Sepulchral honours worthy of her birth,
And each due rite the illustrious dead demand,
To thy dear sister, and my hapless wife—
For me, the vilest of the sons of Thebes,
Heed thou no farther—once more let me go,
A wand'ring exile from my father's roofs;
From Thebes—as erst from Corinth—and explore
That sacred spot on dark Cithæron's brow,
By those who gave me being doom'd my grave
Early as life began—for ah! I feel,
Within this breast I feel the dire presage,
That fate denies me by the common lot
Of man to fall—snatch'd from the jaws of death,

To perish by the signal wrath of Jove,
Long treasur'd for the moment—what that stroke
I know not; but *despair hath arm'd my soul*—
Dearest of men, my children I commend
To thy protecting arm; my sons are firm
In health and manhood; they will least require
Thy friendly aid: but oh! my hapless daughters—
Dear blooming orphans, with such anxious care
Cherish'd beneath these roofs in royal state;
Fed by my hand, and by my watchful eye
Still guarded—how will those poor babes support
At once a father's and a mother's loss?
O take them, prince—O shield them with thy power,
And foster with thy love! Might they be summon'd?
Might they receive a father's last embrace?
To touch them would suspend my pains: but oh!
To glue my clasping arms around their necks,
Would give me sight, and nerve my limbs anew.
What have I said of rapture—'tis denied
To this care-broken heart! To weep their fate,
And o'er them hang in fix'd and silent woe,
Is all now left me—but methinks I hear
Sounds sweet and plaintive, like the tender moans
Of those dear children—yes, they are my children!—
Creon hath gratified my ardent wish;
What can I say—oh torture—

Cre. To thy command
Obedient, I have brought thy children hither.
Oed. Eternal blessings on thee for this kindness!
Come near, my daughters; shudder not to touch
Your FATHER, and your—BROTHER:—view the hands,
Yet red with gore, whose fury hath consign'd me
To everlasting darkness, and forbade
The sight of you and heav'n—a king myself,
And yet a *regicide*—by heav'n and man
Alike abhorr'd: approach, and weep my fate,
But do not curse me with the name of PARENT—
Yes, to behold your angel smiles, that once
Gave vigour to my pulse, is mine no more.
Yet I *can* weep your fate; and I *will* weep
In tears of blood warm gushing from the heart—
With patient fortitude I might have borne
My own disasters, but the sense of yours
Hath quite unmann'd me. Whither will ye go
For respite from your toils, or how assuage
The madness of despair? From public haunts,
And all the gay delights of social life,
Driv'n with disgrace, your virgin bloom to waste
In barren solitude, and execrate
The name of FATHER—Ye must never taste
The sweets of Hymen, nor with eager eyes
Gaze on a smiling progeny; for who,

Who will receive pollution to his arms,
Nor shudder at the black, the baleful train
Of ills impending o'er my hapless race?—
What horror in the tale!—An impious son
Hath slain his father, and, with guilty fires
Flaming, defil'd his mother's sacred bed.—
Pursued with jealous hatred by your sex,
And exil'd by the voice of all mankind,
Thus shall ye pass your wretched days, till death,
Thrice welcome death, shall close the dreadful scene!
Thou, Creon, thou art left their only friend;
Ah! suffer not my poor, forsaken babes,
Like vagabonds, to wander o'er the earth
The sport of infamy—Dear, generous youth,
Extend thy hands, as pledges of thy faith
And firm support—Much, O my daughters, much
This bursting heart would utter more, but grief
Unspeakable, and black despair forbid—
One last, one fervent prayer, midst all its pangs,
That heart devoutly pours—that you may live
As happy, as resign'd, as your hard fate,
In the dark catalogue of human woes
Unequall'd, may permit, where Heav'n's high will
Shall fix your future doom—and may that Heav'n
In rich abundance on my children's heads
Shower down those blessings it denies your SIRE—

Cre. Enough: thy grief transports thee; O! retire
Within the palace.

Oed. I obey thee, prince;
Yet shudder to approach that fatal scene
Of all my guilt.

Cre. 'Tis right,* thou should'st retire:
Time and events require it.

Oed. Know'st thou not
By what dire curses I am bound—

Cre. Declare them.

Oed. To leave these roofs, and thou to drive me hence.
O Prince, with swiftness execute the task.

Cre. The Gods alone can grant thee thy desire

Oed. I am most hateful to those Gods.

Cre. Fear not;
They will befriend thee here.

Oed. Ah might I hope!

Cre. Thou may'st; I speak with confidence.

Oed. Then lead,
Whither thou wilt.

Cre. But let thy children stay.—

Oed. Wilt thou bereave me of my children too!

Cre. Submit—Warn'd by thy suff'rings, Oh! beware
Of that perverseness thou hast rued so dearly.

* In the original, "All things are right on right occasions:" The text seems designedly equivocal and obscure.

Cho. Inhabitants of Thebes, behold your prince,
The mighty Oedipus, whose soaring thought
Pierc'd the dark riddle of the monster Sphynx;
Whose fame * and pow'r, beyond example great,
What son of Cadmus but with envy view'd?—
That Prince behold, by sad reverse of fate
Fall'n from his throne of grandeur to the depth
Of abject misery—Mortal, mark his fate;
Nor him, whom fortune's changeful smile adorns
With momentary triumphs, call thou blest,
Till death decide, and stamp the name of "happy."

* Ὅστις ου ζήλω.

As the text now stands, this is a very difficult passage, and the translations are ambiguous and unsatisfactory. A learned friend informed me of a proposed emendation by a late Editor of Euripides, Dr. Musgrave:

Ὃν. τις ου ζήλῳ πολίων ἵης ἴυχης επεϐλεπεν.

The passage becomes thus interrogative, and the sense is, "whom, who was there of the citizens, but beheld with envy, in consequence of his good fortune?" This sense I have adopted, as the most easy to be translated, and best expressive of the meaning of Sophocles.

THE END.

London: Printed by W. Bulmer and Co
Cleveland-row, St. James's.

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